

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS SCENE
KEEPING KIDS IN THE NEWS

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COACHES:

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Hello sports fans, it's another great day here at High School Sports Scene Magazine.

Well, what a winter sports season did we had!!!!

Area girls basketball teams couldn't have been more successful. In Division 1, the Rockford girls basketball team capped a marvelous season in a big way by winning the state championship in a loaded Division 1. The Rams were an exciting team to watch the entire season as their dazzling offense featured plenty of talented outside shooters.

In Division 2, Lansing Catholic surprised many in the state by capturing the state title. The Cougars stunned a highly-ranked Grand Rapids West Catholic team in the semifinals. That win set up a showdown between the Cougars and Frankenmuth in the state title game. Lansing Catholic then turned in another big effort in the championship game to hold off the Eagles and bring home the state title.

In Division 3, Hemlock claimed its first state title in program history. The Huskies were led by super-senior Regan Finkbeiner who is going down as one of the finest players in school history. Hemlock turned in a pair of big efforts in the state finals with impressive wins against Hart in the state semifinals and Blissfield in the championship game.

Hats off to the girls at St. Charles. The Bulldogs turned in a historic season of their own as they won a regional title for the first time in school history and made their first-ever appearance in the state quarterfinals.

In boys basketball, Laingsburg capped a big season by reaching the state quarterfinals. Long-time basketball powerhouse Saginaw reached the state semifinals in Division 2. Flint Beecher won the state title in Division 3 while Grand Blanc reached the semifinals in Division 1.

On the mats, out area produced a number of individual state champions. The Lowell wrestling team continued its dominance as it won a record 10th straight team state championship. The St. Louis wrestling team reached the Division 4 state team semifinals while Rockford, Holt, Fowlerville, Portland and New Lothrop all qualified for the state meet as well.

This month's issue puts the finishing touches on the winter sports season and wraps up the outstanding performances in bowling, swimming and competitive cheer.

As the weather continues to warm, out athletes will be heading outside for the spring sports season. Keep an eye out for our next issue that will give a look at the team and athletes to watch this spring.

See you at the games!



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Lansing Catholic Celebrates Division 2 Basketball Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

It was a Division 2 state championship season for coach Kacee Reid and her Lansing Catholic girls basketball team which finished at 25-4.

"It was an incredible season that just kept building momentum," Reid said. "It wasn't a perfect season, we never played a perfect game, but the girls just kept working and believing in their preseason goals. Losing a few games early allowed us to focus on what we need to fix in order to compete with the better teams. Had we won all of our games early, I don't think our team would have been as willing to truly self-evaluate what we needed to improve in order to compete at a high level."

Highlights include "winning our league outright, beating multiple ranked teams throughout the season, having redemption on our earlier loss to Haslett by beating them in the district championship, and beating the undefeated No. 1 team in the state (West Catholic) to earn a spot in the State Finals," Reid said.

It was a 59-41 win over West Catholic in the semifinal game. Anna Richards had 25 points while Leah Richards had 14 points and nine rebounds.

In the title game over Frankenmuth, LC prevailed 43-29. Leah Richards had 16 points and nine boards while Anna Richards had

14 points.

The key behind the team's success, Reid said, "was a talented dedicated kids, dedicated coaching staff, and playing a very competitive regular season schedule to prepare us for the bigger games in tournament. Playing multiple ranked teams in season allowed us to truly evaluate and fix our warts. It allowed us to have experience playing in high-stakes games and performing under pressure."

Anna Richards, Reid said "is a superstar, but more importantly, she is team player. She never forces shots and will always let the game come to her. Not focused on her stats, she's focused on winning. She is a 5-10 point guard who will also post you up. Very high basketball IQ. Willing to step up to take a game winning shot or whatever it takes to win the game. Humble, gracious, competitive."

Leah Richards, Reid said, "is the twin sister of Anna. Leah is a 6-foot forward that creates tough matchups for teams. She can post you up, but is also deadly behind the 3-point line (40 percent). She always seems to step up with a huge shot when you need it. She is another kid with high basketball IQ, team player."

Hannah Pricco, Reid said, "is on scholarship to run track/cross country at University of Michigan next year. She is the best defender I have coached. She is always tasked with guarding the other

team's best player. Those players include multiple D1 players. All-state players, Miss Basketball candidates. We don't win many of the games we did without Hannah. She is a menace at the top of our zone causing many deflections and steals, and is an incredible rebounder."

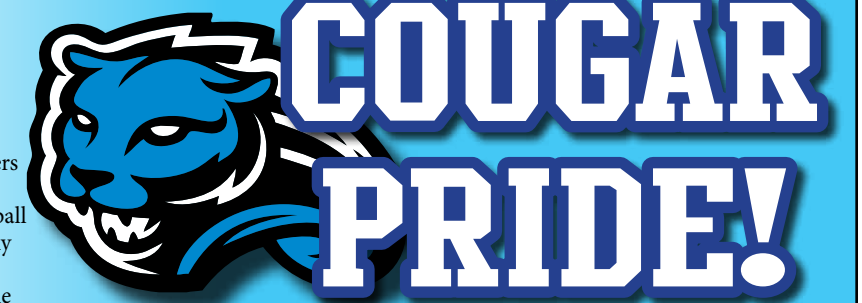
Gabby Halliwill, Reid said, "is a deadly 3-point shooter with a beautiful stroke (43 percent). Gabby runs point for us many times and has incredible vision within our full court transition. She is our most accurate outside threat."

Morgan Wilcox, Reid said, "started at the five-spot all year for us. Morgan is an incredible athlete who can guard in the post or on the perimeter. Next to Hannah, she is our next best defender. She has a 'nose' for the ball and can rebound with authority. Morgan is also an excellent passer from our high post, many times facilitating open shots for our shooters."

Tessa Roe, Reid said, "has been our first kid off the bench all year. Tessa would be a starter/superstar for almost any other team in the state, but she has accepted her role coming off the bench for us. She is a spark both offensively and defensively. She is masterful at finishing at the rim vs much larger opponents and can also hit the 3. Great competitor who steps up for us time and time again."

All of these girls, except Pricco, return next season.

The Lansing Catholic girls basketball won the Division 2 state girls title after defeating Frankenmuth in the finals held at the Breslin Center on the campus of Michigan State University.



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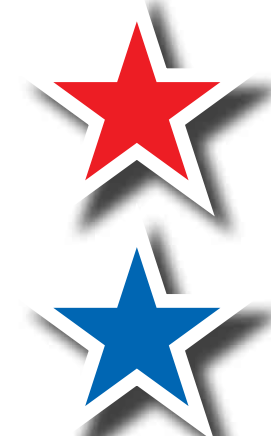
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Rockford Girls Celebrate First State Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

Rockford celebrated its first ever state title in girls basketball on March 18 with a 40-36 win over West Bloomfield in the title game at Michigan State's Breslin Center

Sophomore Anna Wypych finished the game with 20 points and eight rebounds to lead the Rams. But Grace Lyons had the deciding basket with a go-ahead 3-pointer with 40 seconds to play.

"There wasn't anyone around so I let it fly and it went in," she said.

It was her first basket of the day. She hit two free throws with a second to play to seal the title.

Rockford ended the season at 28-1. Its only loss was 61-54 to Grand Rapids West Catholic. In the semifinal round, the Rams defeated Detroit Renaissance 65-42. Lyons had a big performance in the semifinals with 8-of-12 shooting from the floor and 23 points. Alyssa Wypych had 13 points and seven rebounds.

"I want to give West Bloomfield credit,

they're an incredible program," Rockford coach Brad Wilson said. "In my opinion, our girls were great even before they played this game. We had an opportunity to reach greatness in our school history today. Our (motto) was making the next play. They made some plays today when some teams would have folded. Our team didn't flinch. They weathered the storm. I'm proud of our community for supporting us. I'm proud of our girls for making it happen."

The tightest playoff game Rockford had prior to the state finals was a 44-37 win over Jenison in the regional semifinals.

"Rockford is a sports town with high expectations and high standards," Wilson said. "Everywhere you go you can't get away from it. I'm assuming we'll have this conversation for rest of my life."

On Anna Wypych's title game performance, "she came in as a freshman and was so talented," Wilson said. "Those things are earned in the offseason. She puts in more time than most people on the planet. She's a gym rat. When she came here there were some things she had to learn."



The Rockford's girls basketball team celebrates after winning the school's first-ever Division 1 championship.

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Hemlock Girls Capture Division 3 State Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

Hemlock made the most of its first appearance in the state girls basketball finals with a

59-43 win over Blissfield in the Division 3 state title game on March 18 at Michigan State's Breslin Center.

In the finals, senior Regan Finkbeinner had 19 points and four assists, senior Chloe Watson 18 points and six rebounds and junior Lauren Borsenik 16 points and seven boards to end the season at 26-3 as state champs. Blissfield was 27-2. Hemlock was only 1-of-13 in 3-pointers but was 18-of-45 from the floor for 34.0 percent and 22-of-25 at the stripe for 88 percent.

Hemlock was up 25-20 at halftime and 40-30 after the third quarter.

Prior to this season, Hemlock (26-3) had made just two trips to the semifinals, the latest curtailed before it could start due to COVID-19 after the team had advanced to championship weekend in 2021.

Coach Scott Neumeyer celebrated his 10th year with a 179-57 record and the

coveted state title.

"I don't know what I'm supposed to say," Neumeyer said. "It's so surreal. I'm proud of this team, especially the seniors. People don't have an idea how much girls or players spend to get there with all the time outside of practice and summer stuff. I'm happy with how they approached the tournament run. We had a brutal schedule to get here."

"They had a very business like attitude. I'm happy for them for our community and our school; we had tremendous support from the Hemlock community."

On the foul shooting, "these girls work on free throws like crazy," Neumeyer said.

Hemlock beat Hart 57-26 in the semifinal game on Thursday, March 16. The Huskies were 8-of-25 in 3-pointers this game for 32 percent and only shot six free throws. But they were 23-of-53 from the floor for 43.4 percent. Finkeiner was 9-of-13 from the floor for 24 points while Borsenik had 17 points and 10 rebounds.

The toughest game Hemlock had was in the regional finals where it beat Lake City 60-56 in overtime.



Special thanks to Mr. Mike Kollath for contributing images through out the tournament.

CONGRATULATIONS CHLOE FROM THE WELL COMMUNITY CHURCH FAMILY!

Tracy and Greg Mallek would like to Congratulate the Hemlock Women's Basketball Team for making history with their state Championship win.
 Greg - "I've been a student athlete, coach, and administrator in athletics for over 30 years and I've never had as much anxiety and excitement as watching my daughter's team go on this run". So happy for them and the Hemlock community."

CONGRATULATIONS HANNAH AND LAUREN FROM THE WELL COMMUNITY CHURCH FAMILY!

I am so incredibly proud of this team. Blood, sweat and tears on top of countless hours of hard work in the off season contributed to this great accomplishment. What you put in you get out, in everything you do. Coach T adores each of you so much!
 - Coach T

CONGRATULATIONS KY, WE ARE SO PROUD OF YOU.
 Love Mom, Dad & Mallory

REGAN AND TEAMMATES CONGRATULATIONS ON ALL OF YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS THIS SEASON. WE COULDN'T BE PROUDER
 Love mom, dad and Nolan

Team Depth Sparked Hemlock Victory

John Raffel Sports Scene

Chloe Watson, Regan Finkbeiner and Lauren Borsenik made some key contributions to the Hemlock Division 3 state championship team this season, but coach Scott Neumeyer especially liked the diversity his team presented.

"What I really liked was lot

of people got an opportunity to contribute to this win," Neumeyer said after the 59-43 victory over Blissfield in the Division 3 state title game on March 18 at Michigan State. "Everybody had a big part of it. I was happy to see everyone get in, especially those who have been injured all year, I was happy to see that."

Neumeyer admitted the presence of 6-foot-2 junior

Lauren Borsenik and 6-foot-forward Hannah Borsenik came in extremely handy. Borsenik had 16 points and seven rebounds. Hannah had seven rebounds.

"I think we were the most balanced team in the tournament," Neumeyer said. "That's what helped us."

Finkbeiner said while she enjoyed the championship moment it was bittersweet knowing her Hemlock basketball career had ended.

"I'm proud of our community who was all there," she said. "We had a big crowd as we always do.

Chloe Watson looks to make a move for Hemlock in the state title game.

I'm glad I'm ending it on a win.

So are the Hemlock fans.

"It's a great feeling," Finkbeiner said. "Our whole school and whole community was here. I'm proud with all the young girls and grandparents that come. It's good to have that support."

The key, Finkbeiner said, to all the success for the Huskies, "was knowing our roles and reading how a team plays us. If they want to do helpside on our post, then we kick it out to our guards. If they want to stay home on our guards for the 3-point line, we dump it into our posts."



Hemlock Basketball Standout Now Focuses On Softball

John Raffel Sports Scene

It was a fabulous basketball career for Regan Finkbeiner, who led Hemlock to a Division 3 state title.

Now it's time to focus on softball.

Finkbeiner played all but four minutes of the state semifinal and finals at the Breslin Center and was 15 of her 27 from the floor and 9 of 10 free throw attempts.

Prior to the final two games, Finkbeiner was averaging 17.1 points, 3.5 assists and 4.8 steals

Regan Finkbeiner did it all for Hemlock's girl basketball team in 2022-23. She ends her career as Hemlock's all-time leading scorer in basketball.

per game and in February became the program's all-time leading scorer breaking the previous record of 1,302 points.

"My role was especially to be a leader and help guide my team," Finkbeiner said. "We all really wanted to win districts, and soon we're in the regional finals and then we're in the state finals."

Winning the whole thing "means knowing you're the best

Division 3 team in Michigan and it's pretty insane," Finkbeiner said "remember watching these games on TV. It feels so weird to be here, now."

She's committed to continue playing softball after high school at Madonna University.

Finkbeiner said she feels she's good in both basketball and softball. But softball gave her the best opportunity for continuing her sports career on the college level, she said.



St. Charles Girls Basketball Team Turns In Historic Tournament Run

David Cook Sports Scene

The St. Charles girls basketball team turned in a historic post-season run this March.

The Bulldogs, who lost just two games during the regular season, against bigger schools including Division 3 state champion Hemlock and Swan Valley, went on a post-season run that ended in the Division 4 state quarterfinals.

St. Charles opened the tournament

by winning a district title. The Bulldogs defeated Midland Calvary Baptist 65-47 in the district championship game. Bailey Stimac and Cassidy Himler led the team in scoring with 16 points apiece while Emily Zelinko and freshman Kendall Harger scored 13 points.

St. Charles moved on to the Merrill regional where it defeated AuGres-Sims 66-14 in the regional semifinals. The Bulldogs jumped out to a 24-2 lead in the semifinal

game and led 47-9 at halftime. Himler led the way with 11 points while Laina Harger added nine points and Macie Czymbor eight points.

St. Charles then made history in the regional final. The Bulldogs defeated Michigan Lutheran Seminary 39-34 to win the first regional championship in St. Charles history. A 22-10 run in the third quarter keyed the run. Harger led the way with 11 points while Abby Dinninger added seven points

with Stimac and Himler adding six points apiece.

St. Charles made its first-ever appearance in the state quarterfinals in school history where it dropped a 57-49 decision to Maple City Glen Lake. Laina Harger led the way with 14 points while Himler added nine, Czymbor eight and Stimac and Zelinko with seven points apiece.

St. Charles ended the season with a 24-3 overall record. Laina Harger, Stimac and Zelinko all earned first-team, all-conference honors in the Mid State Activities Conference while Himler and Dinninger were both selected second-team, all-conference.



The St. Charles basketball team made school history by winning its first-ever regional championship this season.

Frankenmuth Is State Runner-Up In Division 2

John Raffel Sports Scene

Joe Jacobs coached a Frankenmuth girls basketball team in his third year to the state title game in Division 2 and ended



with a 24-3 record.

Lansing Catholic beat Frankenmuth 43-29 in the title game on March 18 at Michigan State University's Breslin Center.

The Eagles won 53-23 over Belding and 54-27 over Freeland for the regional title and beat Houghton from the western Upper Peninsula 52-36 in the quarterfinal.

It was a defensive struggle against Goodrich with the Eagles leading 13-10 at halftime. It was a 24-20 scoring edge for Frankenmuth in the final half. Clare Conzelman had 15 points for the Eagles while Izzy Benthall had six points and eight boards.

It was tough against Lansing Catholic, which built a 24-7 halftime lead. Frankenmuth cut it to 27-18 after three quarters but Lansing Catholic prevailed in the fourth.

For the Eagles, Lexi Boyke had 16 points and six rebounds.

Frankenmuth had lost to Lansing Cath-

olic 74-42 during the regular season.

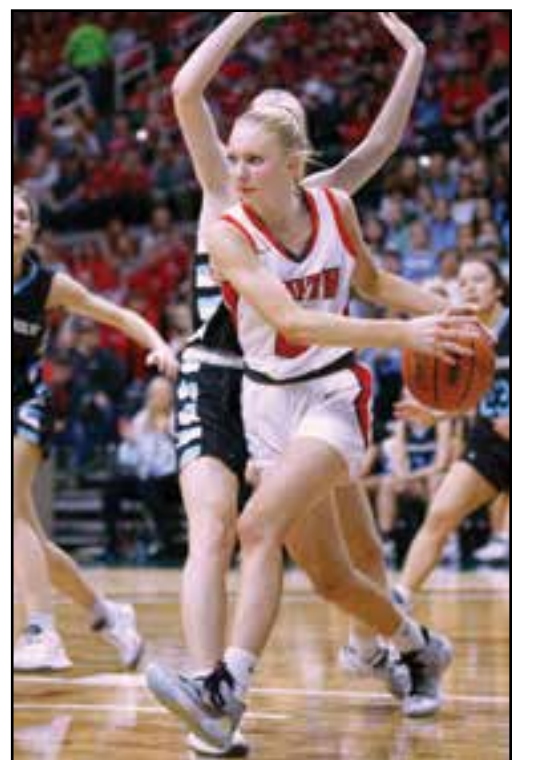
"We just wanted to put our best foot forward," Jacobs said of the title game. "We felt we were playing our best basketball of the season after district and regionals. We wanted to be the best team for 32 minutes. But we came out and unfortunately spotted them an 11-0 cushion. It was difficult to get out of that hole. The girls did a good job of competing in the second half. But we got into a hole we couldn't get out of."

"Lexi Boyke scored the 1,000th point of her career during the third quarter. She missed a season because of an ACL injury. We competed in the second half."

Boyke averaged 13.5 points, 3.0 blocks and 9.0 rebounds a game. She has committed to Central Michigan University.

"You always want to play your best basketball at the end of the season," Jacobs said. "We went through our conference (Tri Valley 8) the third straight year undefeated. Everyone said they wanted to make it to the Breslin Center. We were on a 13-game winning streak going to the Breslin Center. We played good basketball in the regionals against Belding."

"We were averaging giving up 28 points a game and scoring 50 points a game."



The Frankenmuth girls basketball team finished runner-up in the Division 2 finals losing to Lansing Catholic 43-29 in the championship game played at the Breslin Center on the campus of Michigan State University.

No State Championship Three-Peat For Fowler

John Raffel Sports Scene

Fowler was hoping for a third straight Division 4 girls basketball state championship, but it was not meant to be.

The Eagles lost 46-44 to Baraga in the Division 4 semifinals on March 16 at Michigan State's Breslin Center.

Fowler finished the regular season at 15-7 but then went 5-0 in the postseason to enter the

semifinal game against a Baraga team the Eagles had defeated in the 2022 state semifinals.

The game against Baraga went down to the wire and the Eagles weren't able to pull it out.

"I thought we worked really hard," Fowler coach Nathan Goerge said. "We didn't have some shots fall that we typically normally do have go in. We battled, especially in the second half. We never really lost focus. Down the

stretch, they made some plays and credit goes to them.

"These girls never took anything for granted. They worked so hard. All the credit goes to them. They had a lot of pressure after winning it back-to-back."

Fowler entered the season with hopes of another title.

"We had a really good summer basketball season," Goerge said. "I was confident. Then we had to

deal with injuries. We scheduled a tough nonconference schedule. It was a great experience for all of them."

Of the seven regular season losses, the Eagles bowed to higher division teams such as Midland Dow, Kent City, Charlotte, Dansville and Division 2 state champion Lansing Catholic.

Emma Riley, in her final game for Fowler, had 21 points and eight rebounds in the semifinals.

Fowler coach Nathan Goerge watches his team in the state semifinal round.



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Congratulations to our very own St. Charles girls basketball team for making history this season winning our schools first-ever Regional title this season. What an accomplishment. We couldn't be prouder.
St. Charles High School

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Player Of The Year

BIG SCHOOL PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Janae Tyler
Holt, sr.

One of the most dominant post players in the state, Tyler helped lead Holt to its first regional championship since 1975. A Kent State recruit, Tyler averaged 18.1 points and 12.5 rebounds per game this season.

BIG SCHOOL DREAM TEAM

- Braxcynn Baker, Lowell, jr. guard
- Lexi Boyke, Frankenmuth, sr. guard/forward
- Anna Richards, Lansing Catholic, jr. guard
- Janae Tyler, Holt, sr. center
- Anna Wypych, Rockford, so. guard

SPECIAL MENTION

Sydney Gillett, Corunna; Emily Homan, Haslett; Melanie Kolnitys, Midland Dow; Tara Kurncz, DeWitt; Mia McLaughlin, Frankenmuth; Leah Richards, Lansing Catholic; Ava Scanlon, Grand Ledge; Katie Schell, Mt. Pleasant; Madison Uyl, DeWitt; Alyssa Wypych, Rockford.

HONORABLE MENTION

Alayna Armstrong, Grand Ledge; Jaelyn Baker, Charlotte; Gabbie Brya, DeWitt; Jenna Butcher, Midland Dow; Zylah Carter, Waverly; Claire Casey, Mason; Grace Chinavare, Sanford-Meridian; Jordan Cleveland, Alma; Clare Conzelmann, Frankenmuth; Alexis Daugherty, Ionia; Dalton DeBoer, Midland Dow; Rhema Dozier, Holt; Jordyn Egger, Mt. Pleasant; Maddie Fant, Haslett; Reese Gaytan, Williamston; Gabby Halliwill, Lansing Catholic; Ellie Humble, Haslett; Grace Isenath, Haslett; Karrie Keefe, Freeland; Sofia Kingsley, Eaton Rapids; Maya Kiyak, Okemos; Sophia Klinger, East Lansing; Lauren LaFond, Freeland; Isabel Lindo, Haslett; Grace Lyons, Rockford; Grace Mellinger, Alma; Mattie Midkiff, Bullock Creek; Hannah Prisco, Lansing Catholic; Ashlynn Putman, Mason; Rachel Resio, Swan Valley; Jocelyn Shattuck, Mason; Lily Thelen, Portland; Brooke Swartz, Bay City Westerb; Maria Thelen, Portland; Morgan Wilcox, Lansing Catholic; Zar'ria Mitchell, Heritage; Kamari Forrest, Saginaw High.

Presenting

2022-23 Girls Basketball Dream Team



Player Of The Year

SMALL SCHOOL PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Regan Finkbeiner
Hemlock, sr.

This talented senior guard turned in a memorable senior season as she helped Hemlock capture the Division 3 state championship. A versatile guard, Finkbeiner averaged 17.1 points along with 4.8 steals and 3.5 assists.

SMALL SCHOOL DREAM TEAM

- Caitlyn Dickerson, Midland Calvary Baptist, sr. guard
- Regan Finkbeiner, Hemlock, sr. guard
- Halen McLaughlin, Sanford-Meridian, so. guard
- Emma Riley, Fowler, sr. guard
- Megan Zeitz, Dansville, jr. guard

SPECIAL MENTION

Ava Bates, Ovid-Elsie; Lauren Borsenik, Hemlock; Delaney Seaman, Ithaca; Ava Slieff, Michigan Lutheran Seminary; Chloe Watson, Hemlock.

HONORABLE MENTION

Maggie Behmlander, Valley Lutheran; Hannah Borsenik, Hemlock; Evalyn Cole, Ovid-Elsie; Makenzie Doerner, Morrice; Megan Goward, Breckenridge; Laina Harger, St. Charles; Sophia Hauck, Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart; Aubrey Hessbrook, Carson City-Crystal; Lauryn Humphrey, Ithaca; Emily Jackson, Valley Lutheran; Maddy Miller, Coleman; Natasha Nowakowski, Ithaca; Josie Schrot, St. Louis; Bailey Stimac, St. Charles; Kennedy Stout, Carson City-Crystal; Braeden Tokar, Ovid-Elsie; Gabie Wenzel, Michigan Lutheran Seminary; Emily Zelinko, St. Charles.



Trojans Fall In D2 Semis

Leroy Baxter
Sports Scene

It was 10 years since Saginaw High made it to the Breslin Center.

This year's Trojan squad was a special group but unfortunately for Saginaw High its dream season came to a close losing to Ferndale 65-60 in the Division 2 semis. Ferndale went on to win the D2 championship.

Julian Taylor, the long time Saginaw High coach said his team fought hard, but third quarter woes hurt the Trojans in the loss to Ferndale.

"We have a veteran group, and they understand that last year we used to struggle in the third quarter," Taylor said. "The guys I had returning, they understood what it took. We need that energy in the third quar-

ter to get us going, and that would usually be the game right there, that third-quarter run, but Ferndale withheld it, battled back and persevered."

Taylor, who guided the Trojans to the 2012 Class A title, said Ferndale did a lot of the little things to win the game. Saginaw also had 19 turnovers to the Eagles' 11.

"I'm proud of this team," Taylor said. "We battled through adversity all season. If you would've asked me toward the end of the regular season if we would've been here, I probably would've said 'No,' but the guys fought hard and pulled together."

The Trojans won the 3-point battle going a respectable 9 of 21 (42.9%), but lost their bid to earn their 11th state championship game appearance in school history.

Javarie Holiday led the Trojans with 20 points in the loss.



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Benzenberg Brothers Continue Winning Hoops Tradition

Leroy Baxter Sports Scene

Ryan and Tim Benzenberg first caught the coaching bug at an early age watching their dad Lee paced the sidelines while coaching at the former Douglas McArthur High School in Saginaw.

Ryan has settled in as the longtime coach at Cadillac High School, while Tim continues to leave his mark on the game as junior varsity coach at Swan Valley.

Together they bring a wealth of

knowledge to the court.

Ryan's Cadillac team made a run this season narrowly losing to Saginaw High 61-57 in the Division 2 finals played at Alma High School. Cadillac finished the season 22-5.

"When you get tired the first thing to go is your brain," Ryan Benzenberg said after his team's loss to the Trojans.

"In the final minutes of the game we made some mistakes we usually wouldn't and it hurt us in the end. Being from Saginaw you want to play against some

of the best. We didn't look at the history of Saginaw High. We played those guys tough. We lost the game, but we played our hearts out. That's all a coach can ask for."

Tim Benzenberg believes his dad would be proud of the legacy the brothers are continuing to build at their respective programs.

"I think it's always a part of us to coach and to be like him and learn the game from him," Tim Benzenberg said.

When asked about some of the biggest challenges a coach faces today versus a decade ago Tim Benzenberg replied by saying he believes the kids want to just play pick up games more than learn the game of basketball.

"Unfortunately I just started being a head coach about eight years ago, he

said. "It's still a work in progress.

Even with all of the obstacles that face today's coaches, Tim Benzenberg believes the competition drives a coach today.

"I love trying to beat everyone at basketball," Tim Benzenberg said. "Having Ryan as a big brother watching him coach always helped me learn how to coach basketball. I learn a lot by watching him and talking to him during the week about basketball and it's awesome that we have this relationship that we can share together about basketball keeps us together. I love the game."

The brothers are just following in the footsteps that Lee put in front of them. Unfortunately Lee isn't here any longer, having passed away from cancer in 2021, but his legacy on the court continues with his sons.

Tim (Top) and Ryan Benzenberg (below) have done their dad proud coaching their respective basketball teams over the past decade. Lee Benzenberg coached at the former Douglas McArthur for many years before retiring.



Taylor Family Has Hoops In Their Blood

Leroy Baxter Sports Scene

Seven years ago myself and Bob Taylor sat down at Pizza Sams in Midland and Bob said in not too many words how special of a talent his son RJ was.

Mind you RJ Taylor was only a seventh grader in Midland, but with his outstanding pedigree Bob's assessment of his sons talent wasn't far off by any means.

A bold statement. Yes.

But over the last four year's RJ Taylor has lived up to the hype.

RJ spent four seasons playing varsity for Grand Blanc and his legacy will be highlighted by three trips to the Breslin Center.

This season, he averaged 13.8 points, 6.4 rebounds, 5.8 assists, 2.1 steals and had an assist-to-turnover ratio of 6-1. He led the Bobcats to a 25-3 record, the

Saginaw Valley League title and state semifinals. Taylor had a 19-2 post-season record in his career and played on the 2021 state championship team.

"We knew at an early age that RJ was going to be a special player," Bob Taylor said. "I have seen a lot of basketball through the years, but he is probably one of the best passers of the ball I have ever seen. He does so many of the little things so well. He makes everyone around him better."

RJ Taylor is the youngest of the Taylor hoopers with sisters Ellie and Maizee both starring at Midland Dow before playing collegiately at Northwood.

The younger Taylors followed in the footsteps of their parents Bob and Kristen, who left their mark on women's basketball at Oakland University. Bob Taylor was the head coach of the Oakland women's basketball team from

1986-97. Meanwhile Kristen Taylor was also a collegiate athlete.

Bob Taylor went 251-72 (.777) overall and 145-38 (.792) against conference opponents in 11 seasons at Oakland. He led OU to ten 20-win seasons, including a program-record 27 wins during the 1989-90 campaign. Oakland made the NCAA Tournament six times under Taylor, highlighted by a trip to the Final Four in 1990 and an Elite Eight appearance in 1995.

Bob Taylor went on to coach the Northwood men's basketball program from 1997-2010, compiling a career record of 169-183. He posted five winning seasons at NU, including a school-record 21 victories in the 1998-99 season. He led NU to six GLIAC Tournament berths and one NCAA Tournament appearance.

Bob Taylor was inducted into the Oakland University Hall of Fame in 2021.

Now RJ is looking to make his own mark on the game that has been so good to his family. RJ Taylor will continue his collegiate career at Northern Iowa University.

"RJ is a hoops junkie, a winner and has a big time motor," said NIU coach

Ben Jacobson. "He plays with pace, has great timing and a unique ability to get the guys around him to play at a high level. We want to play with great pace, and RJ will help us do that. He brings instant positive energy to all situations on and off the court. We are very fortunate to add RJ to the family!"

RJ believes being the baby of the family has allowed him to find his own niche on the court.

Kristen remembers when RJ was two years old she was carrying him into the gym for practices. He literally lived in and grew up in the gym," she noted.

"I think it comes from that and from watching so many games and, obviously, from being around basketball so much and having a dad who was a college coach," Kristen Taylor said.

Kristen acknowledged that while her



Bob and Kristen Taylor have estimated they have watched nearly 1,500 high school and travel basketball games over the last 12 plus seasons. Ellie, Maizee and RJ have competed at the highest level during their high school careers.

daughters have had to work extremely hard to excel on the basketball court, RJ has always had God-given ability.

"For as long as I can remember hoops was something I always wanted to do," RJ Taylor said. "I played other sports growing up, but basketball was my first love. Now it's my future. I'm definitely looking forward to college and everything it has to offer."

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2022-23 Boys Basketball Dream Team

Player Of The Year

BIG SCHOOL PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Tyler Ode
Saginaw Heritage, jr. guard

Just a junior, Ode is the latest in a long line of outstanding all-around players out of Saginaw. Ode has scholarship offers from Iowa State, Oakland University, Western Michigan and Toledo and has already eclipsed 1,000 points for his career with one season remaining.

BIG SCHOOL DREAM TEAM
Evan Boyd, East Lansing, sr. forward
Tae Boyd, Grand Blanc, sr. forward
Javarie Holliday, Saginaw, sr. guard
Tyler Ode, Saginaw Heritage, jr. guard
RJ Taylor, Grand Blanc, sr. guard

SPECIAL MENTION
Logan Borodychuk, Mt. Pleasant; Lyna Brooks, Saginaw Arthur Hill; Cameron Hutson, East Lansing; Jacob Kowalski, Freeland; Bryce Kurncz, DeWitt; Kaleb Parrish, Mason; DaRon Sherman, Saginaw; Mason Stuck, Chesaning; KJ Torbert, Okemos; Teddy Williams, Grand Ledge; De'Terrion Winters; Chris Zielinski, Midland Dow.

HONORABLE MENTION
Collin Alexander, Okemos; Lance Atkinson, Ionia; Drew Barbee, Mt. Pleasant; Josh Bradley, Saginaw Heritage; Cutler Brandt, Charlotte; Travis Brenner, Frankenmuth; Ben Buzzard, Charlotte; Brooks Cline, Williamston; Tristan Comer, Freeland; Jason Davenport, Midland; Christian Dunn, East Lansing; Colton Dyingser, Shepherd; Max Fellows, Essexville-Garber; Dangelo Fitzpatrick, Haslett; Adam Flannery, DeWitt; Justin Flannery, Shepherd; Isaiah Foster, Holt; Reese Greenfelder, Chesaning; Luch Guerrazzi, Lansing Catholic; Tavion Harden, Lansing Eastern; Braden Hill, Charlotte; Devon Hodges-Smith, Lansing Sexton; Michael Howey, Alma; Wilson Huckebe, Freeland; Braylon Isom, Saginaw Heritage; Drew Kaeckmeister, Swan Valley; Carson Knoll, Frankenmuth; Francisco Lee, Bridgeport; Taelor Lowery, Saginaw; Luke Marlan, Mason; KyRen McKnight, Lansing Eastern; Bryce O'Mara, Grand Blanc; Dominic Novara, Portland; Deunte Phifer, Waverly; Carson Pieters, St. Johns; Sam Rosales, Alma; Braylon Socia, Corunna; Levi Stambaugh, Mason; Austin Stone, Mason; Keyshawn Summerville, Lansing Sexton; Cade Sutherland, Alma; Peyton TerMeer, Corunna; Kevin Triggs, Flint Beecher; Darius Welch, Waverly; Greg Lawson, Davison; Teon Armstrong, Davison; Braylen Himmelein, Davison.

SMALL SCHOOL PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Robert Lee Jr.
Flint Beecher, sr. forward

A dominating force on both sides of the floor, Lee turned in a big season as he helped lead Flint Beecher to the Division 3 state championship. Lee was at his best in the state title game as he scored 29 points and pulled down 11 rebounds against Traverse City St. Francis.

SMALL SCHOOL DREAM TEAM
Jamison Eklund, Pewamo-Westphalia, sr. forward/guard
Robert Lee Jr., Flint Beecher, sr. forward
JT Smith, Blanchard-Montabella, sr. forward
Zander Woodruff, Laingsburg, jr. guard
MJ Yeager, Saginaw Nouvel, jr. guard

SPECIAL MENTION
Grady Eklund, Pewamo-Westphalia; Jacob Halfmann, Fowler; Evan Judge, Blanchard-Montabella; Mason Smith, Carson City-Crystal; Bruce Thelen, Fulton-Middleton; Clay Wittenberg, Ovid-Elsie; Eli Woodruff, Laingsburg; Donny Yeager, Saginaw Nouvel.

HONORABLE MENTION
Chad Brown, Hemlock; Bronson Bupp, Ithaca; Jeff Chandler, Carrollton; Brayden Clark, Carson City-Crystal; Austin Foster, Blanchard-Montabella; Carter Gensch, Hemlock; Max Hammis, Saginaw Nouvel; Josiah Howell, Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart; Ethan Hull, Ithaca; Drew Kelsey, Blanchard-Montabella; Ty Kohlmann, New Lothrop; Jaxon Laubscher, Breckenridge; Charlie Martyn, Ithaca; Nick Metzger, Sanford-Meridian; Will Salgat, Michigan Lutheran Seminary; Logan Thompson, Ovid-Elsie; Elijah Wolter, Valley Lutheran; Grant Wood, Carrollton; Thomas Zacharko, St. Louis.

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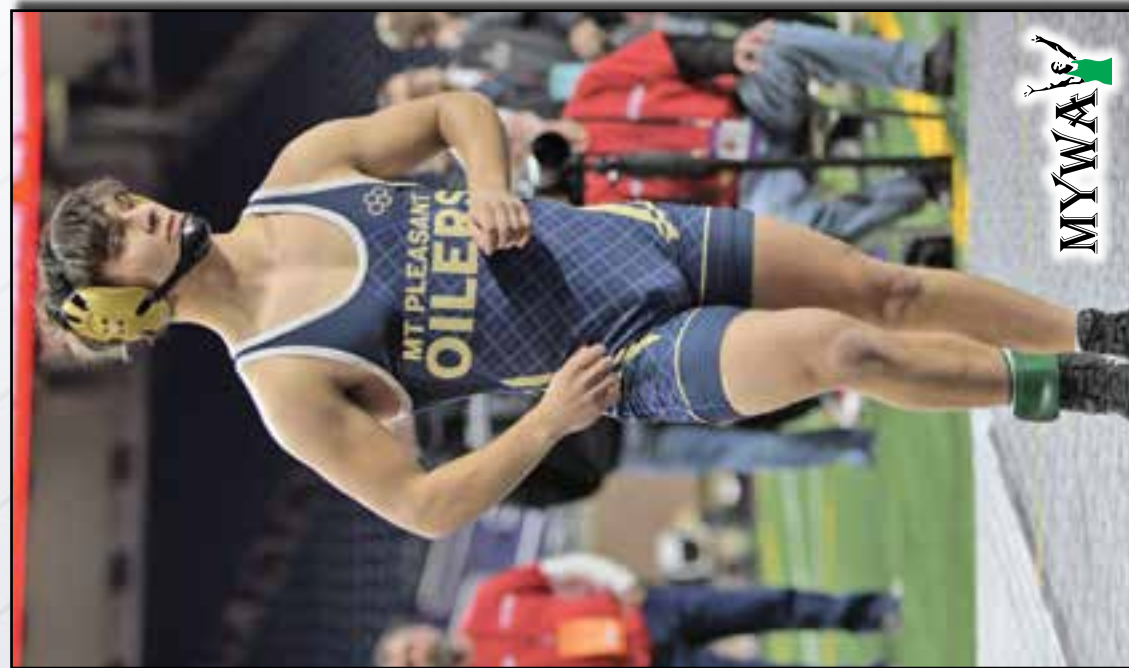
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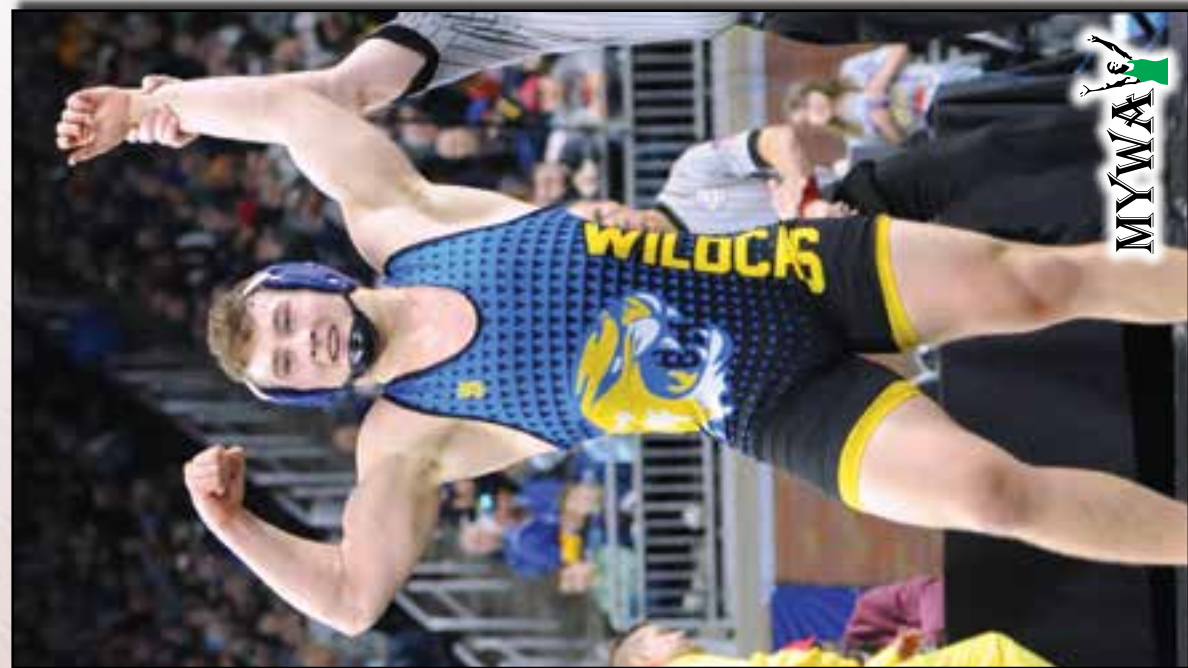
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Grant Stahl of Mt. Pleasant is the Division 1-2 big school wrestler of the year as he turned in a 41-0 record enroute to winning the Division 2 state title at 132 pounds.



Cole Hopkins of Ewart is the Division 3-4 small school wrestler of the year as he turned in a 48-0 record enroute to winning the Division 4 state title at 175 pounds.

Grant Stahl, Mt. Pleasant: After coming close his first three years of high school wrestling, Grant Stahl of Mt. Pleasant left no doubt that he was a state champion this season. A senior who finished his career with a 134-7 record, Stahl turned in a perfect 41-0 record this season enroute to winning the 132-pound title in Division 2.

BIG SCHOOL DIVISION 1 AND 2 FIRST TEAM

106 pounds Jarrett Smith, Lowell: A freshman, Smith placed third in the state in Division 2 and finished the season with a 34-9 record.

113 pounds Carter Cichocki, Lowell: Cichocki turned in a 31-9 record this season and placed second in the state at 113 pounds in Division 2.

120 pounds Jackson Blum, Lowell: A two-time state champion, Blum turned in a 39-3 record this season and is 76-6 his first two years of high school wrestling.

126 pounds Trenden Bashore, DeWitt: A sophomore, Bashore is a two-time state placer who took third at 126 pounds in Division 2 and ended the season with a 46-5 record.

132 pounds Grant Stahl, Mt. Pleasant: After taking third place at state last season, Stahl reached the top of the podium this year at 132 pounds in Division 2 and finished the season with a perfect 41-0 record.

138 pounds Jayden Schwartz, Charlotte: Schwartz capped his high school career in a big way as he won the 138-pound title in Division 2 and finished the season with a 52-2 record.

144 pounds CJ Poole, Lowell: Poole turned in a huge senior season as he won the state title at 144 pounds in Division 2 and finished the season with a 31-8 record.

Big School Division 1 and 2 Special Mention

108 Sawyer Hosford, Holt: (108) Isaac Kukuiski, Bay City John Glenn; (113) Ryan Mosher, Holt; (113) Sean Pettigrew, St. Johns; (113) Ruben Rivera, Bay City John Glenn; (120) Braylen Aulbach, Bay City John Glenn; (120) Logan Dawson, Lowell; (120) Taylor Miller, Mason; (126) Kaden Lapauugh, DeWitt; (126) Alex Segorski, Greenville; (132) Elijah Bunn, Rockford; (138) Owen Segorski, Mason; (138) Cole Riedel, St. Johns; (138) Liam Dalley, Greenville; (144) Dylan Granger, Mason; (144) Jak Keller, Rockford; (157) Jaeyn Grimes, Mason; (175) Derek Badgley, Mason; (175) Logan Demarest, Bay City John Glenn; (190) Jackson Bremner, Holt.

SPORTS SCENE'S SMALL SCHOOL WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

Cole Hopkins, Ewart: A senior who has been one of the top upper weights in the state the past few years, Hopkins wrapped up his career as a two-time, state champion and four-time state placer. This season Hopkins turned in a 48-0 record as he won the state title at 175 pounds in Division 4. Hopkins won the 171-pound title last year in Division 4 as he turned in a 54-0 record. For his career Hopkins turned in a 162-7 overall record.

SMALL SCHOOL DIVISION 3 AND 4 FIRST TEAM

106 pounds Colin Kuhn, St. Louis: A state placer as a freshman, Kuhn came back in his sophomore season to place third at 106 pounds in Division 4 and turn in a 47-6 record.

113 pounds Talan Parsons, Ovid-Elsie: A three-time state placer and state champion as a sophomore, Parsons placed second at 113 pounds in Division 3 and turned in a 50-1 record this season.

120 pounds Daven Lockwood, New Lothrop: After placing eighth as a junior, Lockwood capped his career by taking second at 120 pounds this season with a 30-7 record.

126 pounds Bryson Hernandez, Clare: A sophomore and two-time state placer, Hernandez placed fifth at 126 pounds in Division 3 this season and turned in a 46-5 record.

132 pounds Buddy Leonard, Alma: A sophomore, Leonard turned in a 49-7 record this season and placed third in Division 3 at 132 pounds.

138 pounds Gianni Tripp, Alma: After placing fifth last year as a junior, Tripp capped his career by taking second at 138 pounds in Division 3 this year and turning in a 51-6 record.

144 pounds Camden Johncheck, Williamston: Johncheck capped his career by winning a second consecutive state title this season and turning in a 44-2 record.

Big School Division 3 and 4 Special Mention

106 Quinton Everett, Chesaning: (106) Owen Fogel, St. Louis; (113) Cameron Perez, Lakeview; (113) Alex Rodriguez, St. Louis; (120) Ashton Clark, Lakeview-Lake Odessa; (126) Noah Szewed, Montrose; (126) Ethan Weber, Portland; (132) Dalton Birchmeier, New Lothrop; (132) Tyler Greer, Chippewa Hills; (132) Drew Parker, Portland; (138) Braden Billa, St. Charles; (138) Ian Boden, Port Huron; (144) Daniel Krebs, Lakeview-Lake Odessa; (144) Caleb Sharp, New Lothrop; (144) Hunter Coxon, Montrose; (144) Joseph Bawa, Ithaca; (144) Daniel Krebs, Lakeview-Lake Odessa; (144) Parker Noonan, New Lothrop; (144) Isaiah Pelic, Portland; (144) Cody Ueberroth, Swan Valley; (157) Landyn Thornburg, Montrose; (165) Darin Alward, Durand; (165) Kahlrel Brown, Birch Run; (165) Landon Parker, Eaton Rapids; (175) Gavin Craner, Bedford; (175) Joe Mahaney, Williamston; (175) Cole O'Boyle, Alma; (190) Colin Kuhn, New Lothrop; (190) Branson Goodman, Portland; (190) Justice Onstott, St. Louis; (190) Jack Ward, Bedford; (215) Luke Chambers, Williamston; (215) Danton Looney, Montrose; (285) Jerrold Atwell, Montrose; (285) Alex Burhans, Ewart; (285) Waylon Lingsman, Central-Montcalm; (285) Landon Roe, Birch Run.

INDIVIDUAL WRESTLING STATE PLACERS

- DIVISION 1**
- HOLT**
 Jarrett Smith, 3rd 106
 Maddox Simcoe, 3rd 150
 Carson Crace, 2nd 175
 Logan Dawson, 8th 120
- MASON**
 Taylor Miller, 2nd 120
 Derek Badgley, 3rd 175
 Dylan Granger, 5th 144
 Jaeyn Grimes, 8th 157
- ROCKFORD**
 Elijah Bunn, 2nd 132
 Ryan Ahern, 2nd 190
 Jak Keller, 3rd 144
 Braylen Aulbach, 7th 120
- BAY CITY GLENN**
 Izaak Kukuiski, 5th 106
 Logan Demarest, 5th 175
 Ruben Rivera, 6th 113
 Garrett Forghash, 8th 165
- CHARLOTTE**
 Jayden Schwartz, state champ 138
 Trenden Bashore, 3rd 126
 Kaden Lapauugh, 5th 126
- GREENVILLE**
 Case Johnson, 3rd 215
 Nayte Dobson, 6th 157
 Alex Buskirk, 8th 126
 Liam Dalley, 8th 138
- LOWELL**
 Jackson Blum, state champ 120
 CJ Poole, state champ 144
 Carter Cichocki, 2nd 113
 Owen Segorski, 2nd 138
- DIVISION 2**
- CLARE**
 Joseph Dawe, 4th 144
 Lukeview
 Cameron Perez, 5th 235
 DEWITT
 Jamie Cook, 2nd 125
 Eliana Hillard, 4th 130
- MICHIGAN LUTHERAN SEMINARY**
 Evan Wakefield, state champ 190
- MONTROSE**
 Hunter Coxon, 2nd 144
 Danton Looney, 2nd 215
 Jerrold Atwell, 5th 285
 Landyn Thornburg, 7th 157
 Noah Szewed, 8th 126
- NEW LOTHROP**
 Daven Lockwood, 2nd 120
 Grayson Orr, 2nd 285
 Parker Noonan, 3rd 144
 Colton Symons, 5th 175
 Caleb Sharp, 6th 138
 Dalton Birchmeier, 8th 132
- ST. CHARLES**
 Braden Billa, 8th 138
- ST. LOUIS**
 Alex Rodriguez, 2nd 113
 Colin Kuhn, 3rd 106
 Owen Fogel, 6th 120
 Justice Onstott, 7th 190
- GIRLS DIVISION**
- BELDING**
 Mady Frisbie, state champ 235
- BIRCH RUN**
 Caylynn Chandler, 2nd 135
- CHIPPewa HILLS**
 Natalie Gibson, 5th 105
 Linsay Gibson, 5th 120
- DIVISION 3**
- ALMA**
 Gianni Tripp, 2nd 138
 Buddy Leonard, 3rd 132
 Cole O'Boyle, 3rd 175
- BELDING**
 Gavin Craner, 2nd 175
 Jack Ward, 3rd 190
- BIRCH RUN**
 Landon Roe, 2nd 285
- CENTRAL MONTCALM**
 Waylon Lingsman, 5th 285
- CHESANING**
 Quinton Everett, 3rd 106
- CHIPPewa HILLS**
 Tyler Greer, 6th 132
- CLARE**
 Bryson Hernandez, 5th 126
- CORUNNA**
 Alex Burhans, 7th 285
- Xavier Anderson, 6th 157**
- DIVISION 4**
- EWART**
 Cole Hopkins, state champ 175
 Alex Barkley, 7th 285
- ITHACA**

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April 29	Sat	FULL SHOW	LM, PS, PT, IMCA, SS, FS, MW	7:00 PM
May 6	Sat	FULL SHOW - "Yes 2 Kids" Ride 5:30-6:30pm Janet Zeigler Memorial	LM, PS, PT, IMCA, SS, FS, MW	7:00 PM
May 13	Sat	FULL SHOW RELAY FOR LIFE FUND RAISER/GLTS	LM, PS, PT, IMCA, SS, FS, MW	7:00 PM
May 20	Sat	FULL SHOW PLUS THE RON FLINN 52 Late Models - \$2 lap feature - \$52 per lap for each lap lead (leading at the start/finish line)	LM, PS, PT, IMCA, SS, FS, MW	7:00 PM
May 27	Sat	FULL SHOW PLUS GLSS - Sponsored by Engine Pro.	NO MW, LM, PS, PT, IMCA, SS, FS	7:00 PM
May 28	Sun	FULL SHOW PLUS FIREWORKS	LM, PS, PT, IMCA, SS, FS, MW	7:00 PM

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Lowell Wrestling Team Wins Record 10th Consecutive State Championship

David Cook Sports Scene

The Penn State wrestling team has won 10 national championships since 2011. The Alabama football has won six national championships under Nick Saban since 2009. The New England Patriots won six Super Bowls since the 2000 season. While all those accomplishments qualify as dynasties, it still comes up a bit short of what the Lowell wrestling team has accomplished. When Lowell defeated Goodrich 42-18 in the finals of the Division 2 state championship match at this year's MHSAA team state championships, it marked the 10th consecutive state championship for the Red Arrows.

"It's was real special," said Lowell coach R.J. Boudro. "This was a good, young group of kids and a good senior class. These kids were

special. We had a pretty good season overall and the guys wrestled really good at team states."

Lowell its 10th straight title in convincing fashion. The Red Arrows defeated Birmingham Brother Rice 49-21 in the state quarterfinals and then stopped Gaylor 51-7 in the semifinals before defeating second-seeded Goodrich by 24 points in the final match.

Lowell prepared for the state finals by wrestling as strong a schedule as it could during the season. A formula that has worked like a charm during the past decade.

"We saw some nationally-ranked teams in the first six weeks of the season and that helped prepare us for the tournament," Boudro said. "We lost to Detroit Catholic Central and Dundee. We wrestled really hard against those teams but were not able to get the job done. I think that helped mature us

and the tough competition catapulted us into the post season."

Another key to Lowell's success is the steady stream of quality wrestlers that feed into the program year after year. That stream of talent is no accident as Lowell has a large and efficient youth program that consistently develops solid wrestlers.

"We had over 190 kids in our youth program this year," Boudro said. "We also had 36 kids that were state qualifiers at the MyWay tournament a couple weeks ago. Our coaching staff not only does a great job with the kids on the high school level but they do a great job working with the youth program. Kyle Slocum does a great job overseeing it and Max Pennock, Chris Ebrum, Tyler Greenop and Hunter Browning do



The Lowell wrestling team pinned down a record 10th straight Division 2 state championship after defeating Goodrich 42-18 in the title match.

a great job as well. Our varsity kids also work with the youth program. When we win a state championship it feels like a program win because of all of the people that are involved. From the kids and the coaches and our fans and the administration, it takes a whole program to accomplish winning a state championship."

With that kind of support and with the amount of wrestlers coming back next year, the state title procession is looking good to continue.

"We are going to have 10 state qualifiers returning next year," Boudro said. "We also have a lot of good youth wrestlers coming up."

Pair Of Lowell Wrestlers Bring Home Individual State Championships

David Cook Sports Scene

Come late February, the Lowell wrestling team has made it a habit of winning the Division 2 team state championship. One week later, the Red Arrows traditionally send a large contingent of wrestlers to Ford Field to harvest individual state titles.

This season another large group of Lowell wrestlers made the trip to the individual finals and at the end of the tournament the Red Arrows crowned a pair of individual state champions. This year sophomore

Jackson Blum was his second consecutive state title while senior CJ Poole won his first state title.

Blum capped his sophomore season by defeating Tayden Miller of Mason by technical fall at 120 pounds. Blum, who finished the season with a 39-3 record, won his semifinal match by a pin and his first two matches at the finals by a pin and technical fall.

"Jackson is one of the best wrestlers in the state regardless of weight class," said Lowell coach R.J. Boudro. "Jackson is one of the top ten kids in the country at his

weight class. He had three losses early in the season but he really closed out the season on a roll after his last loss in December."

Poole won the 144-pound title by injury default over Loudon Stradling of Gaylor. Poole finished the season with a 31-8 record while Stradling suffered his first loss of the season against Poole and ended the season with a 50-1 record.

"I was really happy with the way CJ wrestled at state," Boudro said. "He had a really good tournament."



(Top) Lowell sophomore Jackson Blum won his second consecutive state title as he captured the title at the 120-pound weight class.

(Bottom) Lowell senior CJ Poole won the Division 2 individual state title at 144 pounds.

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SPORTS SCENE'S GIRLS WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

Lydia Roope, St. Charles

A senior, Roope won a state championship at 145 pounds this season and turned in a 25-7 record while competing against boys and girls during the season. Roope won girls tournaments during the season and also placed at some boys tournaments this season.



GIRLS ALL-AREA DREAM TEAM - First Team

- 100 pounds Mackenzie Burger, Mt. Pleasant:** A senior, Burger closed out her career in a big way as she placed second in the state at 100 and finished the season with a 26-12 record.
- 105 pounds Natalie Gibson, Chippewa Hills:** A sophomore, Gibson reached the state finals at 105 pounds and finished the season with a 25-6 record.
- 110 pounds Ella Mae Klopff, Freeland:** Klopff turned was a state qualifier at 110 pounds after turning in a strong regular season and finished the season with a 21-19 record.
- 115 pounds Sydney Thompson, Eaton Rapids:** A junior, Thompson placed third in the state at 115 pounds and finished the season with a 20-5 record.
- 120 pounds Cecilia Williams, Mason:** A freshman and nationally-ranked wrestler, Williams won the state title at 120 pounds and finished the season with a 23-5 record.
- 125 pounds Jamie Cook, DeWitt:** This talented sophomore finished second in the state at 125 pounds and finished the season with a 28-7 record.

- 130 pounds Elliana Hillard, DeWitt:** A junior, Hillard placed fourth in the state at 130 pounds and finished the season with a 25-8 record.
- 135 pounds Caylynn Chandler, Birch Run:** A senior, Chandler finished second in the state at 135 pounds and turned in a 13-3 record this season.
- 140 pounds Krysta Luce, Chesaning:** A state qualifier, Luce wrapped up her junior season with a 17-6 record.
- 145 pounds Lydia Roope, St. Charles:** A senior, Roope capped her career by winning the state title at 145 pounds and finishing the season with a 25-7 record.
- 155 pounds Hailee Budrick, Rockford:** Budrick placed third at 155 pounds and ended the season with a 15-9 record.
- 170 pounds Khloe Williams, Clio:** A senior, Williams turned in a perfect season as she won the 170-pound state title and finished the season with a 32-0 record.
- 190 pounds Maddisyn Miller, Ovid-Elsie:** Miller finished third in the state at 190 pounds and finished the season with a 16-5 record.
- 235 pounds Mady Frisbie, Belding:** A sophomore, Frisbie stepped up to the top of the podium as she won the 235-pound title and finished the season with a 21-12 record.

INDIVIDUAL GIRLS DIVISION WRESTLING STATE PLACERS

BELDING Mady Frisbie, state champ 235	DEWITT Jamie Cook, 2 nd 125 Elliana Hillard, 4 th 130	GLADWIN Tricia Pyrzewski, 4 th 100	Morgan Ludwig, 7 th 145	SHEPHERD Shai Curtiss, 6 th 115
BIRCH RUN Caylynn Chandler, 2 nd 135	EATON RAPIDS Sydney Thompson, 3 rd 115 Symbiah Stone, 7 th 120	LOWELL Veronica Tapia, 8 th 100	MT. PLEASANT Mackenzie Burger, 2 nd 100 Felicia Saunders, 6 th 120	ST. CHARLES Lydia Roope, state champ 145
CHIPPewa HILLS Natalie Gibson, 2 nd 105 Linsay Gibson, 5 th 120	FARWELL Tailyah Thrush, 4 th 235	MASON Cecilia Williams, state champ 120	OID-ELSIE Maddisyn Miller, 3 rd 190	ST. LOUIS Olesya Mullins, 6 th 100
CLARE AnnMarie Green, 5 th 235		MIDLAND Arden Eschtruth, 3 rd 125 Halle Spears, 4 th 190	ROCKFORD Hailee Budrick, 3 rd 155	SWAN VALLEY Kennady Titola, 3 rd 120

Mt. Pleasant's Grant Stahl Caps Wrestling Career By Bringing Home Elusive State Title

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

After coming close to his goal during his first three seasons of high school wrestling, Grant Stahl of Mt. Pleasant reached the top of the podium in a big way as he won the 132-pound title at the Division 2 individual state wrestling finals at Ford Field in Detroit.

Stahl capped a storybook senior season by defeating defending state champion Lucio 7-1 in the finals at 132 pounds. The win capped a perfect 41-0 season for Stahl.

"It feels awesome," said Stahl. "It was definitely an accomplishment and feels good to see all the work you put in pay off. To beat someone who is the state champ and take his place, it was definitely not the easy route. I beat some good

guys along the way to get there."

Getting to the top of the podium this year was definitely a long road for Stahl who experienced his share of disappointments along the way.

As a freshman, Stahl compiled a 39-3 record and reached the 103-pound championship match where he fell just one point short. As a sophomore, Stahl turned in a 27-1 record and won a regional championship to qualify for the state finals. Unfortunately, Stahl was unable to compete at the finals as he tested positive for Covid. Last year as a junior Stahl turned in a 27-3 record and finished third at 130 pounds.

"The biggest hurdle was handling all the pressure," Stahl said. "My freshman year I made it into the finals but the pressure got to me. Then my sophomore year I got Covid and couldn't go to state.

My junior year I didn't do that well. I could've done better. This year I stayed calm and under control and I wrestled the best of my career. To go against someone as good as Lucio and score a five-point move and put him on his back, it was the highlight of my career."

A career that ended with a record of 134-7. Stahl began his wrestling career as a seven-year old.

"It's a funny story how I got into wrestling," Stahl said. "I wanted to play basketball but I'm not that tall and my mom said that I should try out for wrestling. I tried it and things took off from there. I love wrestling and have been doing it for 10 years now."

A multi-sport athlete, Stahl put good use of his wrestling skills during the fall where he was a defensive lineman on the Mt. Pleasant football team that qualified

for the playoffs. This past season Stahl earned second-team, all-conference honors as a defensive lineman.

"My wrestling background definitely helped me in football," Stahl said. "I'm not that big and I was constantly going up against 200, 300-pound linemen. They were more than twice my size, but I use leverage and some wrestling moves and run around them."

With his high career completed, Stahl is turning his sights on a college career. Stahl will attend Central Michigan University next year where he plans to wrestle and study either business or criminal justice.

"One of my goals was to go to Central Michigan and wrestle," Stahl said. "CMU is my dream school. I will get to wrestle there and I think it will be a lot of fun."



A four-time state placer, Mt. Pleasant senior Grant Stahl brought home an individual state championship this season.

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Evan Wakefield Adds To Family Legacy As He Brings Home Individual Wrestling State Title

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The last time a Michigan Lutheran Seminary wrestler won an individual state title Ronald Reagan was president of the United State, the price of a gallon of gas was .58 cents and William Milliken was the governor of Michigan.

That year was 1981 and since then several members of the Wakefield family have come close to bringing home a state title for the school. This season, the long wait for another MLS state championship ended as Evan Wakefield won the 190-pound championship in Division 4 with his father, Josh Wakefield, looking on as the MLS head coach.

"It was really awesome to watch Evan win the title," said Michigan Lutheran Seminary coach Josh Wakefield. "He has worked toward that goal his whole career. To see it come to fruition was really cool."

To have a member of the Wakefield family accomplish the feat was fitting as several members of the family have taken a run at winning a state title since both before and after 1981.

"My uncles started wrestling at

MLS in the late 70s and early 80s," Josh Wakefield said. "My uncle Bart Peil finished third in 1978 and second in 1980. My uncle Brett Peil took third in 1981 and fourth in 1983. My brother Justin took fourth place in 1997 and my brother Jason took fourth place in 2001. I took eighth place in 1993 and seventh in 1996."

The entire family was there to see Evan go for the state title and he did not disappoint.

"I think they (brothers and uncles) were probably more excited than Evan was," Josh said. "We got a lot of people down there to watch him wrestle and it was really cool. We had a lot of people that watched him wrestle growing up get down there or watch it streaming."

Evan also provided his family and friends plenty of thrills and nervous moments at the finals. After winning his first two matches at the state meet by pin, Evan was pushed to the limit in the semifinals. Evan needed overtime to claim a 10-8 win against Hudson senior Logan Sallows who finished the season with a 42-12 record.

Evan needed to work extra time in the finals match as well

as he edged out Drew Allgeyer of Bark River Harris 4-2 in overtime. Allgeyer finished the season with a 35-5 record.

"It was an awesome feeling winning state," Evan said. "It was a real nice feeling to see all my work pay off. It didn't really hit me until a couple of days after the finals to realize what I had done. It took a few days to really have it sink in."

Like his father and uncles, Evan knew the feeling of placing at state but not reaching the top step of the podium. As a sophomore Evan placed eighth at the state meet and last year, as a junior, he placed sixth.

Along with winning a state title, Evan also set a new Michigan Lutheran Seminary record for career wins. Evan, who turned in a 54-1 record this season, finished his career with a school-record 167 wins against just 30 losses. The previous record was 161 wins set by Dillon Solomon.

"Setting the career wins record was not a big goal," Evan said. "My main goal was to win a state title. Winning a state title means more than the win record. It is real cool setting the record because I grew up watching Dillon wrestle. He

also coached me my sophomore year. He texted me to go and get the record and win the state title. Having him support me was really special to me."

Wakefield is hoping that his accomplishments this year with the MLS wrestling team will encourage more MLS students to get involved in wrestling. While the individual title was the first for MLS in over 40 years, the school has had numerous state champions in the past. MLS has had a total of nine individual state champions as both Dale Sharrard and Scott Kruszynski won state title in 1981.

"People are surprised to hear there have been so many state champions at MLS," said Josh. "We've had state champions, its just been a while. We started a youth program about six years ago and some of those kids will start coming in. Next year we will have four freshmen coming in with wrestling experience so that will be a building block we hope to con-



Evan Wakefield poses with his parents after winning the 190-pound state title in Division 4 at the state individual wrestling finals.

tinue. We're also hoping that Evan winning a state championship will inspire kids to say that they can do that too."

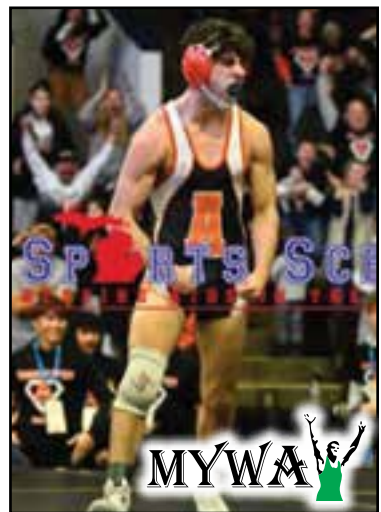
A three-sport athlete at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Evan is getting ready for his final season of high school baseball. In the fall Evan was a member of the MLS football team and played a big part in the team turning in a 9-2 record last fall.

After high school, Evan plans to wrestle in college and is in the process of finding a college.

season with a 51-6 record.

"Gianni was an absolute beast during his four years at Alma High School and will surely be missed," said Alma coach Randy Miniard. "Gianni will go down as one of Alma's finest and most accomplished wrestlers."

Tripp earned the 150th win of his career at the state semifinals where he defeated Luke Sherman of Millington 5-4. Tripp won his first two matches at the state finals by decision.



Alma senior Gianni Tripp capped his career with a fourth trip to the individual state finals where he placed second at 138 pounds.

Camden Johnecheck Brings Home State Title To Williamston

David Cook Sports Scene

Coming into this year's state finals as a two-time state placer, Williamston senior Camden Johnecheck had one more item to cross off his list of high school accomplishments. Johnecheck was successful in his final goal as he won the 144-pound title at the Division 3 individual state wrestling finals at Ford Field in Detroit.

Johnecheck wrapped up his high school career by coming from behind to defeat Dundee freshman Blake Cosby 7-6 in a thrilling final match. Johnecheck trailed 5-0 in the

early going but eventually tied the match and 5-5 and then won the title with a takedown in the final seconds of the match.

"I am known for my conditioning and I felt like if I could make it to the third period I could make up some ground," said Johnecheck. "I had to go for something late, so I went for my single-leg and it just worked out."

The win put the finishing touches on a great career at Williamston. A state placer as a sophomore and junior, Johnecheck turned in a 44-2 record this year enroute to winning the state title.

"It was extremely exciting watching Cam stay so laser-foc-

used through the whole process," said Williamston coach Colton Hanyak. "We tried to keep it on the down low, but Cam got an ankle injury at team district and had to completely change his style of wrestling. He didn't let anything change his goal, he is such a determined individual. He absolutely earned that title."

Along with outstanding wrestling skills, Johnecheck counts on being in superb shape to make the difference in close matches like the one he had in the final.

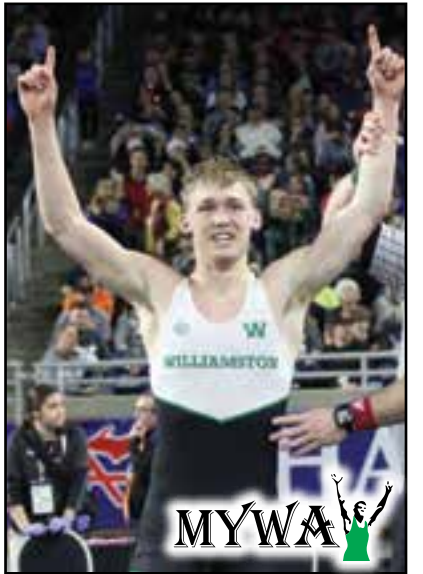
"Cam is extremely determined," Hanyak said. "He has the best lungs I've seen on a wrestler. The majority of his matches

are won based off of pure exhaustion of his opponents. I've felt the pressure first hand and he truly pushes that pace in all matches."

Johnecheck reached the finals by winning a close 3-2 match against Trey Parker in the semifinals after winning his first two matches at state by pin and decision.

Johnecheck leaves a legacy of what Williamston wants in a their wrestlers.

"Cam is the perfect example of a student athlete," Hanyak said. "He has been a big asset to this program and he makes a great example when I am trying to build the numbers in our program. He has shown the younger guys what it takes to be a champion in the classroom and on the mat. He is the exact culture we are trying to create here at Williamston wrestling."



Williamston's Camden Johnecheck won a Division 3 state championship at 144-pounds.

Charlotte Senior Wraps Up High School Wrestling Career With A State Championship

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

One of the most successful wrestlers in Charlotte history, Jayden Schwartz capped his senior season by finishing on top of the podium.

Schwartz, who won 52 matches this season, made number 52 count for even more as he came from behind to defeat Owen Segorski of Lowell in the Division 2 state finals at 138 pounds.

Trailing 4-2 entering the final period, Schwartz finished strong to claim an 11-5 win and earn the first state title of his high school career.

"All the work I have put in over the last few weeks, it was all for

that third period," Schwartz said. "I knew I had the stamina for the third to really push the pace. It feels amazing."

The win was extra special for Schwartz who missed the individual state tournament last season after suffering an injury. Schwartz placed seventh at the state tournament as a sophomore and finished his career with a 135-22 record after going 52-2 this year.

"Jayden is a wonderful young man and a great wrestler," said Charlotte coach Corey Knapp. "I am so honored to have been in his corner for the last four years and watch him grow into an incredible young man both on the mat and in the real world. His resume

speaks for itself and he should be remembered as one of the best to ever walk the halls of Charlotte High School."

Schwartz reached the final round after winning major decisions in his first two rounds and then defeating Gage Race of Jackson Northwest 14-6 in the semifinals.

"Jayden had a dominant state tournament," said Knapp. "He majored his way to the finals and then won 11-5. Just winning a match at the state tournament is hard enough so it truly was an incredible tournament. He found himself down 2-4 going into the third period of the state finals and he managed to score nine points in

the third. I am not surprised that he won a state title as his drive and dedication are superior and this was our plan all along."

A two-year team captain for Charlotte, the 52 wins Schwartz totaled this year was the second-most in school history. Schwartz wrapped up his high school career with three school record including single-season technical falls with 15, career technical falls with 19 and takedowns in a single season with 187, breaking the previous record of 142. Schwartz also tied the Charlotte single-season record for major decisions with 12 and is one of seven individuals in Charlotte wrestling to win a state championship.



Charlotte senior Jayden Schwartz ended his high school career by winning the state title at 138 pounds.

Gianni Tripp Of Alma Caps His High School Career With Fourth Trip To Individual State Finals

David Cook Sports Scene

Alma senior Gianni Tripp ended his career in a big way with a lofty finish at the Division 3 indi-

vidual wrestling state finals.

A four-time state qualifier, Tripp reached the finals at 138 pounds where he dropped a 5-4 decision to Dundee multi-time champion Kaden Chinavare.

The second-place finish was the best finish of Tripp's career as he placed fifth last season. A team captain who helped Alma to three appearances at the team state finals during his career, Tripp ended the

season with a 51-6 record.

"Gianni was an absolute beast during his four years at Alma High School and will surely be missed," said Alma coach Randy Miniard. "Gianni will go down as one of Alma's finest and most accomplished wrestlers."

Tripp earned the 150th win of his career at the state semifinals where he defeated Luke Sherman of Millington 5-4. Tripp won his first two matches at the state finals by decision.

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Holt Girls Win Division 1 State Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

Coach Sandra Teague and her Holt girls bowling team celebrated the Division 1 state title this season.

Holt had a 10-2 regular-season record but was able to put it all together when the postseason came around.

"As a first year coach I was new to coaching this level of athletes," Teague said. "After the first few practices, I knew I had a special group of athletes with a lot of talent. My co-coach Joe VanHorn was a great read on adjustments on the lanes and was a great team coach. These young ladies started out winning their very first tournament two weeks into the season. They seemed unstoppable to me.

"They worked hard at every practice and put in extra practice time every week. We had several new bowlers who advanced their skills to make contributions to the team's success. They were winning there matches and finished in a three-way tie for the CAAC Red Title with a 10-2 record. Believing in themselves, working hard and putting it all together at the right time awarded these Holt Lady Rams with a state championship. The coaches, parents and community couldn't be proud then we

are of these amazing young lady bowlers.

Teague said the girls first tournament win was the Capital Area College Prep Tournament, sponsored by Mason High School held on January 15, 2023.

The Girls Team was the top Qualifiers' for the Mel Wolfe Tournament held and Jax60 on January 28, 2023.

Regional Tournament produced a third-place finish, qualifying the girls varsity team for state finals competition.

The Holt Rams girls bowling team tied for the division title for the CAAC Red Division.

The team of Lola Knox, Emma Cadwell, Ava Seyfried, Maddie Birmingham, Bre DeBerry, Madison Rue and Alissa VanHorn won the Division 1 State Championship at Thunderbowl on March 3, 2023.

Alissa VanHorn, Lola Knox and Madison Rue qualified at the 2023 CAAC Singles Tournament, that took place on February 5, 2023, at Royal Scot. Alissa VanHorn was runner up this year.

Alissa VanHorn, Lola Knox and Madison Rue qualified at the 2023 Regional Singles Level for competition at the Division 1 State Finals. Alissa qualified in the top 16 of the Single State Finals.

Alissa VanHorn, Madison Rue and Lola Knox are part of the 2023 Girls CAAC Red Division All Conference First Team.

Emma Cadwell, Maddie Birmingham and Ava Seyfried are part of the 2023 Girls CAAC Red Division Honorable Mention.

Keys behind teams success Teague said, was "hard work, personal dedication, comradery and drills. These athletes were a tight knit group of athletes. They knew that could depend on each other for help, friendship and an encouraging word when they needed a pick me up. When they stepped on the lanes, they were ready and determined to win. An 'I got you Coach' was a phrase I loved to hear. They were out there to get it done."

Alissa VanHorn "has been working hard at this sport for years," Teague said. "Lots of practice equals lots of success. She finished her senior year's season with a 194 average. She is an accomplished bowler, not only at the high school level, but at a nationwide tournament level.

"She is a winning MJMA participant and competes in the Junior Gold series. This year (2023) she was the runner up for the CAAC Singles Tournament at Royal Scot, that she won as a Junior in 2022. Alissa qualified 4th at the Regional level and was in the top 16 at the State level in Singles competition.

"When Alissa gets on the lane she has a mind set to go to work. She has unwavering confidence in her game and it shows in her

performance. She came through in matches and competitions when the team needed her. She is an extraordinary young woman both on and off the lanes."



The Holt girls bowling team captured the Division 1 title last month at Thunderbowl in Detroit.

performance. She came through in matches and competitions when the team needed her. She is an extraordinary young woman both on and off the lanes."

Lola Knox "is a relatively newer bowler and joined the Holt Varsity bowling team last year as a freshmen," Teague said. "She is an athlete that could attempt any sport and excel. We are all glad she chose bowling. After two years on the high school team, Lola has earned the leadoff spot on the roster. Lola's kind heart and supportive demeanor made her a key member in the success of the team. She comes to every practice with a determination to improve her skills and her game.

"She was successful this year during tournament competition by qualifying at single level tournaments, making the CAAC match play rounds and Regional qualify-

ing to compete at the State Level. Lola's drive to put in the work will help her continue to grow as a skilled bowler. Watch out for her over the next few years."

Madison Rue "was very accomplished in Tournament qualifying this year," Teague said. "She put together impressive six-game sets to earn her next level competition opportunities. She will continue to improve her skill set and lead this team in the coming years.

"I am so proud of these young ladies for being respectful, bright and ambitious. They are fun to work with and easy to coach. We are also very lucky to have a supportive Athletic Director, Chris Bishop. He showed his support by attending school matches and cheering on the bowler. His presence was a boost to the team and appreciated very much by the coaches."

Charlotte girls bowling coach Pat Landry likes this reminder about freshman Savannah Portillo who won the Division 2 state title on March 4. She has three years ago to go.

"Savannah had a dream season as a freshman," Landry said. "The time commitment she has dedicated to her game far exceeds anyone one of her age. She is a year-round bowler, bowling many team and individual tournaments all over. Her season does not start in November, it continues year-round.

Shepherd Girls Fall Shy Of Another State Final

John Raffel Sports Scene

David Carson coaches the Shepherd girls bowling team which had another strong season and was a state semifinalist.

The team had a 9-1 record. "The season was great," Carson said. "I set three goals for the girls and that was to win conference, win the Jack Pine Team Challenge, and qualify to get back to states to defend our state championship. They accomplished all three and

did me one better by winning the regional title. We made a great showing at states but lost in the semi-finals.

"The girls worked well together; if one was down the others seem to step up their games to compensate." "There were several good bowlers on the team.

"Sarah Montney was our highest average bowler this season with a 174," Carson said. "Only a junior and she has qualified all three years at regionals to go to states. Natalie

Hyde has worked hard over the last two seasons. She started the season a little slow

but after hurting her ankle she came back with vengeance and started bowling 25-30 pins above her average.

"Kendra Walch was a very steady bowler over the years. She was averaging consistently between 150-170 per game for me. She was one that if someone was down, she seemed to rise to the occasion and would give us those extra pins we needed. She had high game and a new school record 258."

There were other highlights.

"The team this year set some new school records," Carson said. "Kendra Walch had high game at 258,

Sarah Montney had a 174 average on season, the team set a new baker game record with 229, and they set a new team high with a 936.

"This team worked well together and they couldn't have done it without Amelia King with a high game of 199 and average of 139; Kasina Laughlin with high game 213 and average of 140, and Zoey LaBree our sixth, bowler off the bench with high game 162 average 131. Coming off the bench is a hard thing to do and I could always count on Zoey."

As for next year, "I will have two strong returning players and I have a very well



The Shepherd girls bowling team advanced all the way to the Division 3 semifinals this season.

established JV program to pull from. I believe with a little hard work we can be a contender for conference, and could qualify at Regionals to go back to States."

Lansing Catholic Boy Bowlers Win D3 State Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

The regular season was so-so but the postseason was outstanding for the Lansing Catholic boys bowling team as state champions.

Doug Moore coached the team which was 6-6 in its division during the regular season and 9-6 overall

"We struggled a lot during this season and we have really good competition in the CAAC league," Moore said. "Most of the season we had several bowlers out a number of games so we really only had our top bowlers together for about five-six matches. That also helped us bring up some younger bowlers to get some needed experience at the varsity level. We missed making the cut at regionals last year by seven pins and so that became our goal all year long.

"The last two years we have done well coming off of the CAAC Singles

Tournament. We had a solid performance from everyone against the only team we lost to twice last year, rolling a 992 and 995 series in the regular games. Before that match the players themselves talked one another up to be positive and encourage one another even if a shot doesn't go our way."

Having regionals delayed for 30 hours due to a power outage "made it difficult to keep our energy up," Moore said. "We learned the previous year not to get down because of one bad game. We just had to stay in the hunt. Our second to the last game was bowling alongside Hopkins and both teams really fed off of each other. That game they were better than us but when we switched lanes we added a little more fuel to the fire and made the cut for regionals by four pins.

"We talk about believing; believing we can win, but also believing in

ourselves and each other. What we believe determines our outcome. If we believe we're going to miss that ten-pin, odds are we will. The team did an amazing job of encouraging each other. And it helped that we had three bowlers that repeatedly scored around 200 toward the end of the season. The five starters also returned from last year, so they had something to prove. Finally, we believe in having fun -- we bowl better when we're having fun so that is something we emphasize as well."

James Wheeler was the only bowler who qualified for states in the singles competition the past two years.

"James tends to rise up for competition and thrives on it," Moore said. "This year he made strides in making sure his head was in the game more than his emotions. Senior Jeff Wheeler was our anchor most of this year demonstrating his ability to close out games. Jeff is also a great teacher and willing to walk his teammates through how to improve.

"Senior Ethan Wolcott has been on varsity for three years. He really developed a positive indifference toward his bowling that helped him make mental adjustments rather than stressing about performance which improved his game. Senior Charlie



Lansing Catholic boys won the Division 3 state bowling title.

Gates was the most determined to improve. If sheer will were enough, we never would have lost. He put the team first and took himself out when needed which helped us pull out a win."

In the qualifying round at states "we were blessed enough to make the cut, placing third," Moore said. "We had a very strong game during the quarterfinals and we talked about pacing ourselves for the rest of the day. The only junior starter, Jack Hernly, gave a pep talk to his

teammates reminding them that we didn't come to states to go home early, we came to take home a trophy as champions.

"In the championship game, we started out well but mid-game we started to open more. Charlie Gates had a four-bagger to keep us in it. At the start of the tenth frame we were down eighty pins. Luckily, James and Jeff were able to build on strikes in earlier frames and capitalize on opens from a tough Ogemaw Heights opponent. Our dream of being D3 state champions was now reality."

Charlotte Freshman Bowler Wins State Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

Charlotte girls bowling coach Pat Landry likes this reminder about freshman Savannah Portillo who won the Division 2 state title on March 4. She has three years ago to go.

"Savannah had a dream season as a freshman," Landry said. "The time commitment she has dedicated to her game far exceeds anyone one of her age. She is a year-round bowler, bowling many team and individual tournaments all over. Her season does not start in November, it continues year-round.

Charlotte girls bowling coach Pat Landry likes this reminder about freshman Savannah Portillo who won the Division 2 state title on March 4. She has three years ago to go.

"Savannah had a dream season as a freshman," Landry said. "The time commitment she has dedicated to her game far exceeds anyone one of her age. She is a year-round bowler, bowling many team and individual tournaments all over. Her season does not start in November, it continues year-round.

of lane conditions has aided in her success. Savannah's physical and mental game is pretty solid, the areas she continues to improve on, and work on, is ball choices and lane play, as it relates to ball motion and pin carry. This is a skill that is developed over time."

Landry will never forget how Portillo won the state title as a freshman.

"Her calm and cool demeanor, her ability to see and adapt to lane condition changes, and her willingness to debate and discuss suggestions from her coaches, lends well to Savannah being able to commit fully to the next shot," Landry said. "Savannah practices and competes year-round.

"Savannah understands that preparation and planning is part of this sport. One cannot just throw the ball down the lane and be hopeful the scores will come. Her willingness

to be critiqued, and ability to communicate effectively with her coaches leads to making good choices on ball choices and lane play."

The Division 2 tourney was at Waterford's Century Lanes. Portillo beat Fruitport senior Brynna Hanson in the final 413-384.

It was also an excellent team season.

"This team bought into the process of working hard, rolling good shots and making spares, not worrying about the score," Landry said. "Their dedication to continuously practicing all the drills, working on their mental toughness, and believing in themselves, no matter who they are bowling, has definitely paid dividends this season."



Charlotte's Savannah Portillo won a state bowling champ in Division 2.

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New Lothrop Enjoys State Runner-Up Bowling Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Caryl Walling coached a New Lothrop boys bowling team which had quite a season.

The boys were MMAC conference champions; regional boys team second place; regional individual champion, Cole Bradshaw; regional individual second place – Ashtin Andres; state finals boys team second place state individual finals – Cole Bradshaw fourth place; state individual finals – Ashtin Andres top 20.

The girls team was regional team champions; and state finals top 15.

Isabella Dilts took fourth place in state individual finals while Carlyne Malone was top 30.

“This has been an almost fairytale type of year for the New Lothrop varsity bowling program,” Walling said. “The girls and boys teams enjoyed

unprecedented success this season throughout conference, tournament and post-season competition. Throughout the season, both the boys and girls teams demonstrated greatness through their hard work, dedication to continuous improvement, and tenacity to overcome obstacles.

“Our student-athletes continuously pushed for excellence, asking to bowl every Saturday in conference and every Sunday in tournaments across the state. We won over 25 medals in various tournaments and brought home two large Michigan shaped trophies. The awards and accolades are not the only measures of success for this program.”

Cole Bradshaw, Wallin said, “is a junior this year and three year Co-Captain. He is the highest averaging bowler on the MMAC and has won or placed second in many

tournaments over the past three years. His high score of the year was a 280 at Regionals, but he averaged well over 220 for the entire season. Cole practices almost every day of the week, often mentoring other two-handed students during these times.

“He often watches others on the team, coaching them during tournaments, sometimes even in singles tournaments when they are his competitors. He is one of the most technical bowlers I have ever had. Cole takes his role as captain very seriously, even acting as coordinator for the New Lothrop Singles Tournament (which he developed the format, flyer, advertising, fundraisers, and coordinating activities).”

Ashtin Andres “is a junior two-hander,” Walling said. “He is one of the top three bowlers in the MMAC Conference and has the top series on the league, bowling two game 500 series. He averaged well over 220 at tournaments this season, increasing significantly over last year. He took second place at regionals, missing first place by only 4 pins. Ashtin takes his role as upperclassman very



The New Lothrop bowling team finished second in the state in Division 4 in 2023.

seriously, often volunteering to help coach the Junior Varsity and Middle School teams.

“This young man is one of the most exciting bowlers on the lanes right now. His explosive talent is tempered by a jovial and positive attitude that is often needed on the team. Ashtin also bowls in sport shot leagues and has qualified for the 2023

Junior Gold National Championships.”

Kohen Andres, Walling said, “is a three-year co-captain and a senior. He is the captain that focuses on the team moral and works to ensure everyone is focused on the positive aspects that will help with the game. He averaged over 185 this year, and high games of 245 and 233 during the season.”

Saginaw Nouvel Bowler Crowned State Champion

John Raffel Sports Scene

It doesn't surprise Brian Montini, head coach of Saginaw Nouvel Catholic Central boys varsity bowling team, that Alex McCarthy, a sophomore second-year varsity bowler, was the Division II state champion.

“It was an excellent followup to his freshman season,” Montini said. “Alex and I started this journey at the same time. This is also my

second season as head coach. The team worked hard together to help Alex achieve his goal for this season: state champion. I could not be happier to witness and have a part in Alex winning this championship.

“Alex took first place both years in the TVC West conference. His average this year was 202 in 23 games and last year he had a 208 in 24 games. Alex was first team all conference both years and was given the TVC Sportsmanship

Award this year, as well. Beyond those great stats, as a team, he helped us become Division 4 Team Regional Champions this year allowing us to take the team to states. Unfortunately, we did not do as well during the team event.”

The keys to McCarthy's success, Montini said, “has been hard work. Alex has been bowling since he was 2 years old. His grandfather would take him to the bowling alley. Alex learned a lot from this experience and owes all of his success because of his grandfather. Alex is also a great all around person. Everyone knows Alex and when he is bowling there are a lot of eyes on him. He just has a natural form that you

do not see very often due to the current take-off of two-handed bowling.

Montini said focus has been a key behind McCarthy's success.

“Alex has been able to understand the league, bowlers and lane conditions to make the necessary adjustment to achieve the success he has had,” Montini said. “Alex bowls in a league with other teammates during the offseason. Alex's true love is golf. As great of a bowling talent he is, he also carries that talent on the golf course.

“Alex is looking forward to this upcoming golf season as he would love to have a similar season and win a state golf championship. Alex would love to have a future in golf!”



Saginaw Nouvel's Alex McCarthy won the Division 4 state championship in 2023.

Rockford Gymnasts Win State Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

It was another amazing season for Rockford coach Michelle Ankney and her undefeated state championship team.

It was a tight meet for team first-place honors with the Rams scoring 144.5 points and holding off Jackson with 142.4. “We had a fantastic season,” Ankney said. “We learned a lot and grew as a team. It was a lot of fun to cap it all off with a team win at states. There were a lot of highlights this season, but one highlight that comes to mind is at the end of January we were at the Kenowa Invite, and we were down two of our top scorers due to injuries and illness.

“We had to move our lineup around several different times, and I had a variety of girls step up and compete well for us as a team that day. We really had to pull together and fight for that win. I think it proved to us all that we had a lot of grit, determination, and depth to our team. We needed to see that we were strong even when we were down a few of our athletes.”

Performers at the state meet were Lacey Scheid, Hailey Hill, Kate Tracey, Kayley Burke, Elise Watkins,

Claire Adams, Addi Pitzer, Ellie Wilcox and Avery Renberg.

“State was a huge highlight this year,” Ankney said. “We knew all week we were going to have to end on beam, and we had been a little shaky on beam this season. These girls worked for weeks on their beam routines and their mental focus to finish strong. It was amazing to watch their success as we ended on one of the most nerve wracking events. It was a highlight to finish strong and ever so sweet when they announced us state champions. “Honestly, I think our focus on the mental side of the sport this year was key. We spent a lot of time talking about how to prepare for events, the best ways to self talk while performing, and how to put the past behind you to move onto the next thing, and all of the mental prep proved invaluable throughout the competitive season. We were working on being mentally strong, along with preparing our routines. The second biggest factor is knowing this team is here for you no matter what. We travel as a team, we cheer extra loud as a team, and every member of the team plays a vital role to the success of the team as a whole. This is very important to

all of us.”

Lacey Scheid, Ankney said, is a senior, and she was our top scorer all season long, along with being team captain. She had a fabulous season, and she finished at state by placing on every event, including fourth in the all around.

Junior Hailey Hill, Ankney said, “stepped up this season and proved how consistency pays off. Hailey is an extremely hard worker. She puts in lots of numbers, and works on perfecting all the small details in all her routines. She was consistent across all four events, and she hit 8 for 8 routines at team states and individual states this year. She finished 2nd on the beam and fourth in the all-around.”

Sophomore Kate Tracey's beam throughout this season has been vital to our team,” Ankney said. “Kate works hard on all the events and is very solid in the all around. Her beam, however, is where we have needed her to come in big multiple times this season, and she shows up and does great things.”

Junior Claire Adams “contributes with lots of power on vault and bars,” Ankney said. “Both of those events steadily improved throughout the entire season, and her power and control on those events were just what the team needed at state.

Junior Kayley Burke “also comes in with lots of power, and we see it shine through on vault and floor,”



The Rockford gymnastics team wrapped up a successful winter sports season by winning a state championship.

Ankney said. “Kayley worked on upgrading her vault for regionals and State. She contributed on both events at team state, and then came in second on vault at individual state.”

Hill, Ankney added, “had a fabulous season this year. She made steady growth throughout the entire season, and she ended up surprising herself at how well she wrapped up her season. Hailey is one of the hardest workers in the gym. She trains hard and puts in lots of numbers for all of her skills. She continues to push herself to improve her skills, get new skills, and perfect the ones she already has. Hailey is also one of the biggest encouragers on our team. She will celebrate all victories, big or small, for every one of her team-

mates. She cheers loud and helps lead our team in positivity. “She won the all around at Regionals for Division 2. She also placed second on beam and fourth in the all around at state for Division 2. Her two biggest keys to success have been working on perfecting the little details and working on the mental side of the sport. For the little details, in a sport that is looking to deduct for any mistake, Hailey really worked to lower her deductions on every event. She has one of the best execution scores for our team. As far as the mental goes, it has been a process throughout the season, but she has worked to find positive ways to think about gymnastics and build confidence in the skills she is performing.”

Grand Ledge Gymnasts Bring Home Individual State Championships

David Cook Sports Scene

It was a clean sweep for Grand Ledge gymnasts at the MHSAA individual gymnastics championships. Grand Ledge senior Alaina Yaney won the Division 1 individual championship while Lydia Beaton

of Grand Ledge won the Division 2 individual title.

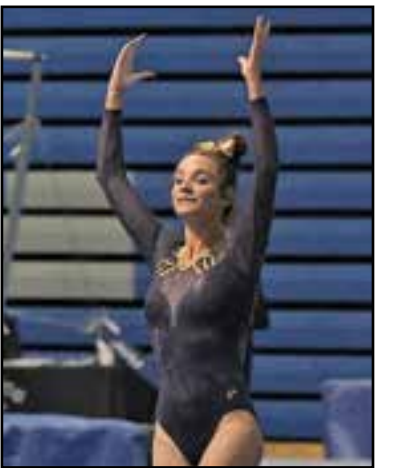
Yaney, who was the runner-up last year by a half point, defeated last year's individual champion Morgan Ruffing of Livonia this time. Yaney finished with a score of 38.075. Yaney took first place in both the

balance beam (9.475) and the vault (9.7). Yaney's vault score was also the 16th best score in finals history. Yaney also tied for second on the floor and placed third on the uneven parallel bars.

Yaney, who also won a regional championship, became the eighth

Grand Ledge gymnast in program history to bring home an individual state title.

In Division 2, Beaton won the title with a score of 36.650. Beaton finished first in both the vault (9.450) and the balance beam (9.575) to win the title.



Grand Ledge senior Alaina Yaney.

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Pewamo-Westphalia Seventh In State Finals

John Raffel Sports Scene

It was another impressive season for Pewamo-Westphalia's cheer-leading squad which was seventh in Division 4 this season.

Staci Myers coached her seventh team at the state finals.

"This team and group of athletes gave everything they had at each practice, they worked to improve at each competition," Myers said. "They practice not only in the gym but at home and wanted to make sure they were improving each day and because of this work ethic is why we got so far in the season and back to state finals.

"One big highlight that sticks out this year is our round 2. Last year, 2022, was the first year in a while that we weren't maxed out with points in Round 2. This year,

we were back. And had so many young athletes out on the floor performing these tough round 2 skills to hit that max point value."

It was also competitive for P-W to determine which of its girls would be in round 2.

"It's cool to see the drive behind those athletes," Myers said. "All wanting their shot at it and working through the pain to get in that round. Round 2, in our opinion, is always the hardest. You have six girls performing, all the same skills, timing, technique, passion. They all need to match. Our senior in that round, Emma, really led them in that round.

"As always, the highlight is making it to the state finals floor. 2023 was our 27th state appearance. We hold the second highest record in Michigan for all divisions going to States. It's not easy. It's never been

'easy'. These girls walk into this program knowing it's going to be a fight and it's a battle they prepare for at such a young age. We tell our athletes "if" you can make it through four years of Competitive Cheer at PW, you can make it through anything."

Myers enjoyed coaching Emma Flanigan.

"Emma is one of our two seniors," Myers said. "She's been on varsity, in all three rounds, for the four years she's been cheering for us. She is mega talented, but what stands out the most about her is her passion. That's something you can't teach, and it's something she has, and it's never faltered. She inspires her teammates to be the best they can be.

"So many of our girls this year, and years prior, have said "do it like Emma". She has that fire, and it burns deep. She's thrown most of our round 3 tumbling all four years, she has been on center for round 2 since she was a junior and has been a leader to our program since she stepped foot on the mat

her freshman year."

Flanigan has been in all three rounds of varsity cheer.

"The key to her success goes beyond being a naturally talented athlete," Myers said. "That she is, there's no doubt. She thinks like an athlete, practices like a champion, and competes like a fireball. She is all around one of the most fun performers we've ever had the pleasure to coach. Emma's attitude and drive is unmatched. She goes all out every practice and does it with such grace. It's so obvious how much our under classman look up to her and strive to be like her. It's our hope that she left her mark on them, and that they do their best to have 'Emma's attitude'.

"Emma has continued to improve each year. This year was her first year being a base for a couple



It was another state finals appearance for Pewamo-Westphalia's cheer team.

of different stunts in our round 3, a spot she was brand new to and she was willing to learn that spot. She also was a flyer in round 3, being a flyer, base, and tumbler in round 3 is remarkable to have such versatility but she did it with such enthusiasm and positivity."

Also placing at the state cheer finals were Merrill, fifth in Division 4; Portland seventh and Lakewood eighth, in Division 3 and Bay City Western fourth and Mason seventh in Division 2,

Bay City Western Cheerleaders Fourth In State

John Raffel Sports Scene

Bay City Western's competitive cheer team and coach August Rojas enjoyed a season, which ended with a fourth-place finish at the state meet with a score of 767.94.

"This season was a roller coaster, to say the least," Rojas said. "This team endured obstacle after obstacle and came out on top. We had high expectations coming off the best season in Western history. Our overarching goal was to win Districts as we fell 3 points short in 2022. In November, we pulled our highest skill in Round 2 (Back Tuck) because as a team we couldn't get the job done. Coming

into the last half of January, the girls almost lost a first-place finish at an invitational because of our Round 2 skills.

"They came to practice that following Monday and suckered down. Each competition, we told the team to always go out on the mat and be the best Bay City Western. We should always leave the mat feeling the best, regardless of what the judges think. This strategy put us over the competition as we went into post-season. We always told ourselves it is 0-0 going into each round."

Rojas added: "We can't control our competition, but we can control how we feel on the mat. Our favorite memory was at District

finals round 3. Our five surrounding teams came out and cheered us on to the district title. Not only are we doing it for ourselves, but we do it for all the teams who support us.

"Bringing home not only our first mitten, but second one this season was an amazing feeling. Making our first state appearance and placing fourth showed us that all the work we have put in, paid off."

Highlights included Saginaw Valley League runner-up (final score: 748.18); district champion (final score: 763.52); regional champion (final score: 776.36) and Rojas named SVL Coach of the Year the second straight time.

"The success of our program stems from our multiple sport athletes," Rojas said. "As a program we encourage our team to participate in a variety sport during the fall and spring to learn different skills



Bay City Western's cheer team was fourth in the state.

to be successful. Our athletes in season push themselves to work harder outside and inside practice. They perform cheer homework on non-practice days.

"When it comes to postseason, they prepare their round 3 by performing 20 fullouts during district week and performed 17 full-outs during regional week," Rojas said. "Their drive for success creates friendships with their teammates

and schools across Michigan."

Western's top athletes included Bella Glumm who was recognized by fellow Saginaw Valley League coaches and was awarded the 2023 MVP of the SVL League.

Also, senior Ambria Nagel is an all-around multi-sport athlete who has committed to Central Michigan University for cross country and track.

Area Swimmers And Divers Compete At State Swimming And Diving Finals

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

DIVISION 1

Ann Arbor Pioneer won the Division 1 state title for the third consecutive season as the Pioneers totaled 288 points. Holland West Ottawa took second place with 177 points while Brighton was third with 156 points.

Rockford Swimmers Compete At State Finals

The Rockford swim team placed 12th at the Division 1 state finals with a total of 61.5 points.

Rockford was led by senior diver Julian Cardenas. Cardenas, who placed second at state last season, won the diving title this year with a score of 474.35.

In the pool, the Rams were paced by junior Will Cheney who placed fourth in the 50 freestyle and 13th in the 100 freestyle. Junior Andrew Lepech placed 14th in the 100 breaststroke.

The Rams also had a pair of relay teams place as the 200 freestyle relay team of Gabe Rakow, Logan Stevens, Ben Seymour and Will Cheney placed 14th while the 200 medley relay team of Jake Herrington, Lepech, Seymour and Cheney placed 13th.

DIVISION 2

Birmingham Groves won the Division 2 swim championship as it totaled 274 points. University of Detroit Jesuit was second with 267 points with Birmingham Seaholm placing third with 210 points.

Midland Dow Swim Places In Top Ten

The Midland Dow swim team finished in tenth place at the state

finals with 85 points.

Dow was led at the finals by a pair of relay teams that placed in the top eight. The 200 free relay team of Noah Buist, Harry Shuster, Thomas Bacigalupo and Eli Soderberg placed third while the 400 free relay team of Bacigalupo, Shuster, Soderberg and Buist placed sixth.

Buist also placed in a pair of events as an individual as he finished sixth in the 100 freestyle and 11th in the 50 free. Soderberg also placed in two individual swims taking 11th in the 200 IM and 13th in the 500 freestyle.

Okemos Swimmers Finish In Top 15 At State Meet

The Okemos swim team placed 13th overall at the Division 2 state swim finals with 61 total points.

Okemos was led by junior Alex Huang who placed sixth in both the 100 butterfly and the 100 breaststroke. Senior Evan Singletary placed 13th in the 50 freestyle.

Okemos also had a trio of relay teams place. The 200 free relay team of Huang, Derrin Cosguner, Derek Latimer and Singletary placed ninth. The 400 free relay team of Singletary, Latimer, Cosguner and Huang placed 12th with the 200 medley relay team of Singletary, Cosguner, Max Hsu and Latimer finishing 15th.

Saginaw Heritage Place In Top 20 At State

The Saginaw Heritage swim team wrapped up the season by placing 17th overall at the Division 2 swimming state finals with 32 points.

Heritage was led by the 200 free

relay team of Tommy Mackley, Nathan Booth, Anderson Li and Tyler Hammis who placed 10th. The 400 free relay team of Mackley, Booth, Li and Hammis placed 15th.

Mackley and Hammis also placed in a pair of events as individuals. Mackley placed 11th in the 100 free and 15th in the 50 free while Hammis took 15th in the 50 free and 16th in the 100 freestyle.

DIVISION 3

Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook-Kingswood won the Division 3 swimming and diving state championship with 271 points. East Grand Rapids placed second with 259 points while Holland Christian was third with 161 points.

DeWitt Places 10th At State Meet

DeWitt placed 10th overall at the Division 3 state finals with 90 points.

The Panthers were led by freshman Carson Reynolds who placed third in the diving competition. Senior Erik Keisling turned in a big state-finals effort as he placed seventh in the 500 freestyle and 14th in the 200 freestyle. Junior Dominic Rose placed 12th in the 200 freestyle and 16th in the 100 free. Junior Kaleb Casler placed 13th in the 200 IM while senior Lucas Busch was 14th in the 100 freestyle.

DeWitt also had a trio of relay teams reach the medal stand led by the 400 free relay team of Casler, Busch, Rose and Keisling who placed sixth. The 200 free relay team of Casler, Reid Rusthoven, Ben Mion and Ryder Thompson placed 11th while the 200 medley



Saginaw Heritage swimmers prepare to compete in a relay at the Division 2 state swimming and diving state.

relay team of Keisling, Thompson, Mion and Rose placed 13th.

Alma Swimmers Turn In Big Efforts At State Meet

The Alma swim team upped their scoring total at the state finals this season as it recorded 34 team points, 10 more than last season's total.

Junior Jack Chiodini led the way for Alma as he earned all-state honors in two events. Chiodini placed sixth in the 100 breaststroke and took eighth in the 200 individual medley.

Junior diver Issac Winn also earned all-state honors as he placed 13th in the diving competition.

Alma also had a relay team earn all-state honors as the 200 medley-relay team of Conner Adams, Chiodini, Keegan Crowe and Winn placed 14th.

Mason Places In Top 25 At State Swim Finals

The Mason swim team finished 23rd at the Division 3 state swimming finals.

Junior Nick West led the way for the Bulldogs as he placed seventh

in the 200 freestyle and 15th in the 100 butterfly. Junior Evan Collins took 16th in both the 500 freestyle and the 200 freestyle while junior Atticus Erbe placed 12th in diving and junior Max Collins placed 12th in the 500 freestyle.

The Bulldogs also had a relay team earn all-state honors as the 400 free relay team of Evan Collins, Gerald VerHage, Max Collins and West placed 15th.

Haslett Diver Earns All-State Honors

Haslett junior Gryffin Porter capped a big season of diving by placing second at the Division 3 swimming and diving championships. Porter, who placed fourth in the diving competition last season, totaled 428.75 points to place second this season.

Eaton Rapids Swimmer Earns All State

Eaton Rapids senior Avery Jones capped his career by earning all-state honors in a pair of events at the Division 3 state meet. A two-event, all-state placer last season as well, Jones placed sixth in the 200 freestyle and eighth in the 100 freestyle this season.

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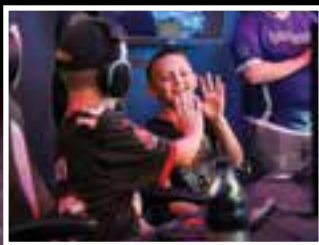
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